LAURA LOOKING TO PUT HER BEST **FOOT FORWARD** Page 4



A KNIT ON THE **TILES FOR LADIES' CLUB** Page 20



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Natalie had baby weeks before killing

A young mother allegedly murdered by her ex-boyfriend had given birth to their son just six weeks before, a court was told. Natalie James, who also had a seven-year-old son

from a previous relationship, died of a knife wound at her home in Kings Road, Rushall, in August.

Ex-partner Carl Truffas has pleaded not guilty to her murder and is stand-

Ex-partner Carl Truffas has pleaded not guilty to her murder and is standing trial at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

The jury was told on Monday that 33-year-old Truffas had broken into Miss James's flat on August 6 following acrimonious text messages between the pair.

He is said to have smashed a window with a brick at the 23-year-old's home and then wrecked her TV to "let his anger out".

Miss Deborah Gould, prosecuting, said when Miss James returned to her flat early on August 7, following an evening at a friend's house, she reported the burglary to the police. Miss Gould said while officers were at the flat, neighbours saw Truffas scaling a wall and hiding before running back after the police partol car had left.

"Natalie James and her friend Jennifer Staples were in the kitchen," she said. "The defendant came bounding in manic and wide-eyed.

were in the kitchen," she said. "The defendant came bounding in manic and wide-eyed.

"He grabbed her by the throat and reached behind him and pulled an eight-inch blade with a serrated edge from the sink. He put the knife up to her face. She tried to push him away and shouted 'stop'." Miss Gould said it was as Miss Staples called 999 that Truffas stabbed Miss James.

"Jennifer found Natalie slumped in the kitchen, there was blood everywhere. The defendant was astride her covered in blood, he kept repeating 'I love you, Nat."

astride her covered in blood, he kept repeated and arrested Truffas, who had drunk up to eight pints of lager and taken cocaine, the court heard.

When details of the case were read out, Miss James friends and relatives were in tears.

Truffas denies murder and claims he acted in self defence. He has pleaded guilty to burglary.

The trial continues.

Manor to miss MRSA target

There have been six cases of MRSA at Walsall Manor Hospital in the last year, it has emerged.

The number, revealed at a board of directors meeting at the Pleck Road hospital, means it will miss its target of six for the financial year. Shahana Khan, director of finance, said the news was "disapman, unecor of infance, said the news was "disap-pointing" for the trust. In the report she put before the board, she said the trust takes any cases of MRSA seriously and each case would be "thoroughly investigated".

investigated". The hospital is working with the primary care trust and the strategic health authority to find new ways of working. It was reported that the number of cases of MRSA fell to an all-time low at Walsall Manor Hospital in 2009 with three cases compared with nine in 2008-09.

Crowning glory as queen Stacey chosen

Some towns may struggle to find a carnival queen – but in Willenhall there is no shortage of girls keen to don a tiara and take on the glamorous role.

orous role.

This year six young women were vying for the role as queen. A selection event took place on Saturday at the Chart Centre, Gomer Street to crown this year's queen.

Winner Stacey Senior was the oldest of all the entrants at 26 and lives in New Invention.

She said: "I have got a bit of a political motivation. I am a social worker, I cover this area and I have been given a lot of freedom to make a difference and what I have had the chance to do is get to know communities. It is probably one of the only platforms left for community spirit."

Entrant Sally Kirk, aged 19, from Short Heath is a policing student at Wolverhampton

University. She said: "It is about being proud of where you are from." Amy Downes, aged 19, from Hawthorn Place, Bentley, said she had hoped to use the experience to raise money for breast cancer charities, while catering and hospitality student Cat Smith, aged 19, from Walsall Road said: "The competition is a chance to get your voice heard."

Hairdressing student Laura Weston, aged 21, from Rose Hill said she wanted to "make Willenhall a better place". And youngest entrant Nicole Seaton, aged 17, who is studying media at Walsall College, said the contest was good for the community.

Winners were chosen for the carnival's cherub, munchkin, rosebud and princess. This year's carnival is on June 11 at Willenhall Memorial Park from 11am. To run a stall call Sharon on 01902 411611 or 07909 627736.



on students Schools which have taken on pupils from a doomed Walsall school halfway through the year are being forced to foot the bill after the council said it was not possible to fund them.

Schools face

bill for taking

being forced to toot the bill after the council said it was not possible to fund them.

Scores of pupils have left Sneyd Community School in Bloxwich before its official closure at the end of this school year. But the funding paid to the Vernon Way school for the pupils does not follow them if they change before the end of the year. Most of the pupils are transferring to Brownhills School. Helen Keenan, head of Brownhills School, had appealed for the funding to be redirected to the schools taking on Sneyd pupils.

But bosses at Serco, the private company in charge of education in Walsall, said her request could not be supported. Any money left over at Sneyd School after it closes this year will go into the education budget for the whole of Walsall.

This led to a funding zap of around \$90.000 for

School after it closes this year will go into the education budget for the whole of Walsall.

This led to a funding gap of around £90,000 for Brownhills School, Deakin Avenue, after it took in 60 mid-year admissions from Sneyd, Mrs Keenan said: "All we will get funded for the children now is from September – it's tough luck basically.

"The most important thing should be the children and their welfare, but it was said the most important thing is that Sneyd doesn't close with a deficit." Graham Talbot, of Serco, said: "The forum was unable to support the request from Brownhills on the grounds that the school had been fully funded for all pupils on roll during the January 2010 school census and the January 2011 school census eriod. "The schools forum has agreed to fund all children of statutory school age who will be moving to Brownhills or other maintained schools in Walsall to complete their education from the start of the next academic year, when Sneyd School will officially have closed." The forum appreciated that Brown-

He added: "The forum appreciated that Brown hills had openly welcomed pupils."

Four vehicles in latest crash at town terminus E UP A' BUSSTAT

walsallchronicle@ expressandstar.co.uk

Two buses and two cars smashed into each other at Walsall's accident-plagued bus station.

Although no one was injured the latest collision is prompting calls for the terminus to be better policed or

to be better policed or even redesigned.
A double decker bus, single decker bus and two cars collided in St Paul's Street.
In the past few years, a pensioner has been killed and several people injured at the site, which only opened in 2000.
There are now calls for police to issue more fines to stop motorists wrongly driving through the station and for transport bosses to look again at its design.

bosses to look again at its design.

The latest accident happened at 4.10pm on Monday near stands A to C. Two said: "The design is appalling cars—a Range Rover and a Mini and the amount of cars that been in the pedestrianised area been in the pedestrianised area shouldn't be there is awful.—collided and were then shunted by two National Express West Midlands buses, the 10a Brownhills West and 51
Birmingham to Walsall.

Eyewitness Shaun Stead from Chuckery, a 40-year-old former National Express driver, and the said more needed to be regular risk assessments at all place.

Forwards gather to watch as the emergency services deal with the four-vehicle crash which closed St Paul's Street in Walsall.

Paul's Street in Walsall.

Viguestion would be what had to be led from the buses.

Walsall College mature the first place as they will have striven through a pedestrianised Prince Road, Pleck said. There is obviously a safety issue here. The road on which the crash on the problem to the cars doing there in the first place as they will have striven through a pedestrianised Prince Road, Pleck said. There is obviously a safety issue here. The road on which the crash out the prince Road, Pleck said. There is obviously a safety issue here. Walsall Council leader Mike from Chuckery, a 40-year-old from Chuckery, a 40-year-old from Chuckery a first place as they will have striven through a pedestrianised Prince Road, Pleck said. There is obviously a safety issue here. The road on which the crash out the road leading to it.

Walsall Council leader Mike four-vehicle crash which closed St Paul's Street in Walsall.

The amount of cars that the amount of cars that the road leading to it.

Walsall College mature friven through a pedestrianised Prince Road, Pleck said. There is obviously a safety issue here. The cars and buses come said an investigation would whizzing around too fast."

Walsall Council leader Mike regular risk assessments at all place.



A third bomb scare in town

Hundreds of staff and shoppers were evacuated from Walsall town centre after a suspicious package was found – the third security alert in less than a fortnight.

Park Street was closed for around three hours on Saturday after a member of the public tipped off police.

Saturday after a member of the public tipped or police.

It comes just days after the centre was shut down ther previous Monday for six hours due to a bomb scare. Police said the latest incident, however, was not a hoax and was an abandoned parcel.

Part of Park Street, including the entrance to the Saddlers Centre was closed around 1pm with police advising shoppers to avoid the area.

The specialist Royal Logistic Corps bomb disposal unit arrived at 2.25pm, but the area, which included shops such as Marks and Spencer, WH Smith, New Look and McDonald's restaurant, as well as a number of banks, was reopened an hour later.

Professional driver David Hancox, aged 45, from Queen Elizabeth Avenue in Bentley was unable to get to his bank while the police cordon was in place. He said: "I came into town especially to go to the bank."

"I am away all the time so this is a pretty big incon enience."

vemence.
Hospital teacher Jan Niesluchouski, aged 57, from
Ettingshall Park in Wolverhampton, added: "It has
ruined my afternoon, but I understand they have got
to take precautions."



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House buying cheap Drive to hire social workers

Falling house prices and rising rents have made it cheaper to buy a house than be a tenant in Walsall. New research shows it is now less edpensive to buy in eight out of 10 towns in the country, including Walsall and Birmingham.

Renting a home now costs an verage of 10.5 per cent more than paying interest on a mortgage for a comparable property – up from a premium of 8.7 per cent in mid-2010.

Fencing

to deter vandals

A steel fence is to be erected around a Walsall park after its picnic area and newly-planted trees were wrecked by yobs.

were wrecked by yobs.
West Midlands Police
have asked for safety
measures to be put in
place at Kings Hill Park,
Darlaston, as part of its
£200,000 revamp.
It is hoped the measures will help boost security and safety at the
park, which has long
been plagued with problems of anti-social behaviour, including youths on
mini-motos.
Residents have also

Residents have also called for action.

As part of the next phase of work, set to begin in May, a 5ft 10ins high fence will be put up along the Old Park Road

boundary, with the same fencing and lockable gates put up at the car

park on the corner of Old Park Road and Kings Hill Field.

Existing gates and bar-riers giving access to the park from Kings Hill Field and School Street will also be replaced with high steel lockable gates, with pedestrian access. Towering

ambition

Aprolific fundraiser in Walsall is planning to cycle 1,600 miles between three towers in Europe.
Glyn Marston, aged 48, who has run more than 30 marathons and raised more than £100,000 over the decades, will cycle from the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy to the Eiffel Tower in Paris and on to Blackpool Tower.
Mr Marston, from New Invention, will attempt the Triple Tower Challenge in aid of the Mayor of Walsall's Charity Appeal alongside his

Accoding to property website Zoopla.co.uk, it is 38 per cent cheaper to buy a typical first-time home than to rent one.

An ew strategy is being put in place at Walsall Council to entice social workers after more than \$1.5\$ million was spent on agency

Andrew Perrin, of Fraser Wood estate agents, in Lichfield Street, Walsall, said: "It all much depends on personal circumstances. We see first time buyers who traditionally were in their 20s are now in their 30s. They haven't got the deposit, or have got loans or university fees to pay off."

workers in 2009-10.

turnover of 11 per cent, so now a strategy has been drawn up to tackle the problem.

Some key workers will be given pay rises, while dozens more staff will be issued with new and revised job descriptions.

It also proposes to make sure social workers have a "manage-able" workload, that the right staff are in the right place at the right time, that they have oppor-

tunities to develop, and that staff morale is a key focus.

A report states: "As a result of increasing retention of social work staff it is expected that we will reduce the amount spent on recruitment to posts, agency staff and sickness absence."

"Consistency in staffing and increased experience and morale will lead to improved services to children and their carers."

Town street parking fees now in force

Controversial on-street parking fees came into orce in Walsall this week – covering more than 300 paces and effectively ruling out free parking in the wn centre

town centre. Motorists in Walsall are now being charged to use the 310 spots in 19 streets, which will rake in £100,000 a year for the council. The pay and display parking costs 20p for every 10 minutes for a maximum of 30 minutes or two hours depending on location. Areas affected in the town centre include Station Street, Hatherton Street and Lichfield Street. Council chiefs say the money raised will be used for highways improvements and covering the costs of the scheme. costs of the scheme.

Transport boss councillor Tom Ansell said: "We Transport boss councillor Tom Ansell said: "We estimate there are around 310 spaces that will be affected by the changes to on-street parking, which will help generate funding of around £100k.
"This will be used to offset the cost of the scheme, including maintaining the 32 ticket machines and making improvements to the highway."

Other streets where parking meters have been installed are Ablewell Street, Bott Lane, Bradford Street, Freer Street, Goodall Street, Little Newport Street and Lower Forster Street, Conditions of the street where parking are the street and Lower Forster Street.

It is the latest move to raise revenue from parking in the town for Walsall Council, which must save £65 million over the next three years and is axing more than 400 jobs in its first wave of cuts.

than 400 Jobs in 18 first wave of cuts.

In 2009, parking charges were introduced on Sundays in council-controlled car parks, raising £25,000 in just under 12 months. The council-controlled traffic wardens, introduced in 2009 after the authority took over parking control from West Midlands Police, raised more than £500,000 in a year from parking fines.

Poundland fined over driver hours

Poundland has been fined more than £73 000 for wing scores of workers to drive without taking

proper breaks.

The Willenhall-based discount giant was prosecuted after a seven-month investigation by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). Officials inspected 59 vehicles and more than 200 drivers were questioned nationwide.

The company was fined 773,600 with £555 costs by Wolverhampton magistrates after bosses admitted 48 charges of causing drivers to exceed their driving hours without a break. Each driver in the case also admitted the offences and was fined.

VOSA's operations director, Alex Fiddes, said last week that the organisation's investigation started in July last year and uncovered a total of 96 hours of offences by Poundland and 18 of its drivers.

"Tired drivers run the risk of causing serious or fatal accidents. This case shows what a dim view the courts take of drivers and operators who abuse drivers' hours rules and don't take proper rests," he said.

Poundland distribution boss Andy Monk said: "We The Willenhall-based discount giant was pro

Poundland distribution boss Andy Monk said: "We are extremely disappointed that our normally robust internal systems have, on this occasion, let us down.These have been reviewed."

Job losses warning

Job losses at Walsall Manor Hospital over the coming years are likely, according to the chairman of the board of directors.

Ben Reidtold a public meeting last week that the number of posts to go was likely to be "in the 10s" as a result of re-structuring the workforce at the Pleck

a result of re-structuring the working of the Road hospital

"It would be ridiculous of me to give assurances that there will be no redundancies. My sense is there will be a number and it will be in the 10s not the 10s as we change the services and [the jobs] don't fit in with the way we will do things.

Front-line medical posts would not go in the cull,, Mr Reid added.

Trader's £10,000 bill for 4am gem robbery

Burglars got away with a haul of silver jewellery in an early-morning raid on a shop in Walsall that left the owner with a £10,000 repair bill.

Thieves raided Ajay Jewellers, Caldmore Green. They broke through

locks, doors and shutters to gain entry to the shop at around 3.45am walsallchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk shopkeeper Kamal Shinh, aged 55, said raiders had taken patterns used to make up silver iewells.

jewellery and a number of silver jewells.

Mr Shinh said the whole burglary had been captured on CCTV.

"It all happened in a matter of a few minutes," he said.

"The alarms went off at about 4.05am. It looks like they used a crowbar to open the shutter."

"The police came straight away but missed the burglars by a matter of seconds.

"They seemed to spot the police car arriving and ran out, and as far as I am aware the officers saw them leaving the scene."

A clean-up operation was under way this week, but Mr Shinh said repairs to the doors and the shutter would take a fortnight. He is not expecting to reopen for some time.

"There is concern among all the jewellers about the number of break-ins which have happened recently," he added.

Identify

"It just seems to be one incident after another. The police have been very good and I hope that they will be able to identify these people and bring them to court." The business is still calculating the cost of the missing items but the damage will cost at least \$10,000.

E10,000.

West Midlands Police spokeswoman Catherine Hickman said:
"Walsall police responded to an
alarm activation at a jewellers in
Caldmore Green at 4.10am.
Some time between 3.45am and
4am offenders had attempted to
gain entry to Ajay Jewellers."
Armed robbers and burglars
have targeted West Midlands
jewellers more than 100 times in
the past five years.

jewellers more than 100 times in the past five years.

In October, Laxmi Jewellers, in Pleck, was raided, with the intruders getting away with \$9,000 of rings. In the same month, a gunman struck at Dulhan Jewellers, Palfrey, escaping with a \$100,000 haul.

Anyone with information is urged to call 0345 113 5000.



Bright sparks who recycle

Meadow View Primary pupils Keanan Mucklow, eight, Jamie Williams, 10, Benjamin and Bradley Harper-Blakemore, eight, and front, Katie Owen, five, who have been collecting batteries ina recycling competition.

win prizes including top-of-the-range laptop computers and £200 and £100 book tokens. Walsall Council has teamed up with

national recycling consultancy firm Valpak and G&P Batteries to set up

Pupils from 130 schools and colleges cross Walsall are busy collecting bat-Meadow View JMI School in Pheasey

for hospice run Walkers, joggers and runners are being invited to take part in the Great Midlands Fun Run for St Giles Hospice Walsall. Staff and regulars at the One Man and His Dog pub, in Bloxwich, were among the first to sign up for the 8.5 mile run through the streets of Sutton Coldfield on June 5. The 12-strong team is set to swell in numbers as the Turnberry Road pub's joint managers Emma O'Malley and Neil O'Conmell spread the word. Emma said: "Neil and I manage a community pub and we wanted to choose a local organisation to adopt as our chosen charity for 2011 – one that our regulars could identify with and support." Sharon Woodland St Giles Walsall

Kamal Shinh outside Aiav Jewellers.

Pubgoers sign

lenge in aid of the Mayor organisation to adopt as our chosen charity Appeal alongside his support cyclist Joe Sarling over two weeks from April 11.

Mr Marston had give up running in 2006 because of a knee injury of the state of the state

teries as part of a recycling contest.

The schools that collect the most will

Meadow View JMI School in Pheasey have been taking part.
Headteacher Angie Richards said:
'Tm delighted that the children and their parents have responded in earnest to this campaign."
To find out more about the scheme email info@valpak.co.uk or call 08450 682 572.

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thechronicle

Council to force staff out

The number of compulsory redundancies at Walsall Council could rise

The number of computory redundancies at Walsall Council could rise as requests for voluntary redundancies are now being considered, council chiefs have warned.

Of the 202 expressions of interest in voluntary redundancy or early retirement, 182 have so far been approved by management.

Council leader Mike Bird said figures were fluid and would keep changing until April, but if applications for voluntary redundancy did not come in the right areas, more compulsory cuts could be a possibility. It is estimated there will have to be around 102 compulsory redundancies as the council cuts 438 posts, 187 of which are currently vacant.

Vulnerable

Vulnerable

Councillor Bird said: "When you do a trawl for redundancies, many people who apply may not be in the right sector so we can't allow everybody to otherwise the service in that department could be deficient. "If we make a post vacant through voluntary redundancy, then by law we cannot replace it for six or 12 months, so we could not just deploy someone there." The situation is changing all the time as people's circumstances change."

Unison regional officer Tony Jones said: "In respect of job cuts, Unison has given notice to council leadersthat they are in danger of stripping the social and economic fibre in Walsall.

"Cuts to front line staff who provide

social and economic fibre in Walsall.

"Cuts to front line staff who provide
essential services to the most vulnerable will just lead to further demands
on council and taxpayers money as
well as causing immense hardship."

£500,000 arts bid by school

A £500,000 drama studio and digital arts room is set to be built at a Walsall school.

Barr Beacon Language College, which was highly praised by Ofsted last month, has applied to Walsall Council for planning permission to build the first floor extension for exciting and stimulating accommodation for learning and enjoyment. The studios will be built on top of three ground-floor classrooms before the school year starts in September.

The funding is coming from section 106 contributions made to Walsall Council by developers.

The drama studio with a wooden sprung floor is intended to be one space, with no means to divide it up, creating a "much-needed" flexible space for the school.

The digital arts room will house computer facilities with 27 work stations and an interactive white board.

Sunday a fun day

A fun day will be held by Manor Farm Community Association in King George Crescent, Rushall, Walsall, this Sunday, March 13, from 10am. Walsall's Area Partnership team will be on hand to talk about children's holiday care and Pelsall & Greenfields Children's Centre will also offer infor-mation. Call 01922 614316 for details.

Park loo bulldozed

Arboretum has now been closed so work can go ahead on the park's £7.5million restoration.

The toilets in the centre green are to be demolished as part of the £700,000 third phase of the project. Work is being carried out by Croft Building and Conservation Ltd and is scheduled to run until July. New toilets have been earmarked for the

new visitors centre, which is due to be launched in 2012.

Councillor Anthony Harris, Walsall cabinet member for leisure, culture and the environment, said: "People will be able to use the toilets in the arboretum play area while the work is carried out.

"Real changes are taking shape at this popular park and give us all a taste of the exciting things to come."

Army life beckoning Students from Walsall are among those finding out about life in the Army at

a careers exhibition this week. The annual event is being held from Monday to Friday, March 7-11, at Site 4 at MoD Stafford.

4 at MoD Stafford.

Pupils from Brownhills Community Technology College and Walsall College are visiting to find out about roles such as medical technicians, communications systems operators and infantry soldiers.

In addition to seeing and testing the latest Army equipment and vehicles such as tanks, armoured vehicles and communications devices, they will be able to learn more about the on-going training and NVQ qualifications, apprenticeships and degrees.

Young and old joining £1.2m obesity battle

More than £1.2 million has spent on projects tackling obesity in Walsall after a shocking survey found that most adults and many children were overweight. The outlay has funded a range of exercise classes to battle the bulge.

many children were overweight. The outlay has funded a range of exercise classes to battle the bulge.

A report revealed that 74 per cent of adults in Walsall were overweight or obese and 26 per cent were clinically obese. Nationally, one in four adults are obese — more than 20 per cent above their ideal body weight. Up to 9,000 Walsall children aged between two and 15 could also fall into the obese category.

Walsallchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk

Go-it-alone
hospital bid

progresses

Walsallchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk

The Children's Fund-Life project sees young-sters aged eight to 16 using active computer games such as the Nintendo Wii to keep fit.

The Fit For A Fiver gym membership scheme is targeted at middle-aged men.

Launched with the help of £100,000 from NHS Walsall, it encourages males aged men over 40 to visit the countrol its own affairs and give patients to have more of a say. Managers have now submitted self-assessment forms to the Strategic Health Authority outlining the Manor's readiness to become a

freedom from Government control has taken crucial steps forward.

The hospital is working towards Foundation Trust status, which would allow it to control its own affairs and give patients to have more of a say. Managers have now submitted self-assessment forms to the Strategie Health Authority outlining the Manor's readiness to become a Foundation Trust hospital.

The chief executive is also set to meet bosses from NHS West Midlands to discuss the details of the Manor's progress and lans.

from NHS west Mulanans to anscuss the details of the Manor's progress and plans.

Michael Scott, interim chief executive, said: "Our self-assessment forms were submitted at the end of January but no formal feedback has yet been received. We do know this is imminent."

Another document, that has to be signed off by the Manor, the SHA and Department of Health, has to be submitted by the end of March.

Timeline

Timeline

"This document outlines the necessary milestones and actions to get to Foundation Trust status." Mr Scott added.

The report has to include the Manor's goals and planned timeline for its bid. Bosses will include an overview of health in Walsall and any issues and risks surrounding performance, governance, finance and quality.

Mr Scott will then meet with Phil Miligan, NHS West Midlands's director of performance and provider development, to discuss the bid.

In a letter to Mr Scott, Mr Miligan said: "I will shortly arrange to meet with you and your chairman to discuss our assessment and the actions we will need to take to ensure that you can proceed to become an FT."

The outcome of the Manor's bid is expected to be known by the beginning of 2013 at the latest. It had been delayed by the move into the new £174 million building and by the application process which was made tougher in August 2010.

gyms at only £5 per month for an initial three

Offer

Offer

If they attend regularly, they will be offered a further three months' membership, again at only £5 per month. The charge is usually £29.

Other schemes include the Make It Count and the Way 4ward physical activity for children, community dieticians, commercial weight loss services, maternal and early years service for mothers, the Time 2 Change activity programme for adults, food co-operative Walsall Fresh, and allotment aid.

gramme for adults, food co-operative Walsall Fresh, and allotment aid. NHS Walsall healthy weight children's leader Jo Hudson said everything was being done to beat rising obesity levels. She said: "We work together to ensure there are a wide range of services available in Walsall for both adults and children in order to help dren in order to help them make healthier choices."

Do ya think Garry's sexy?



Star quality - Rod Stewart impersonator Garry Pease, Walsall grandfather

Star quality – Rod Stewart impersonator Garry Pease wears it well after swapping life in a Walsall factory for strutting around the stage as his musical hero. The grandfather's tribute to the rocker is proving so popular, he is already fully booked every weekend for the rest of the year. And with his uncanny resemblance to the everpopular Scot, it is not hard to see why the 51-year-old often has passers-by doing a double take. "I have been chased by people and

of a double take.

"I have been chased by people and asked for autographs, especially when I'm abroad," said the father-of-two, of Attlee Road, Bentley.

Garry said: "The first time I sang for people was in a social club. They had a band on and said if anyone wanted to get up and sing, as long as the band could play it, they could. I sang Sailing and I had people coming up to me saying that I should try doing it for a livine." get up and sing, as long as the band could play it, they could. I sang Sailing and I had people coming up to me saying that I should try doing it for a living."

With help from his wife of 32 years, Karen, Garry set up the Rod Stewart

Bentley Mill Way.

He has performed in Dubai, Spain, "Pal love Rod to come to one of my swell Green Social Club, Wilenhall, on April 24. Tickets cost £5.



Garry performs Rod Stewart songs

Experience and toured pubs and clubs. As word spread and his fan base grew, major bookings came in and he gave up his job as a machinist at nuts and bolts factory Stanley Horne, in Bentley Mill Way.

He has neufromed in Dubai Spain

Move to extract dentists

Emergency dentists in Walsall could be moved out to free up space at the cramped NHS Walk-in Centre in High Street.

The Dental Access Centre was set up for patients in need of urgent treatment. The team could soon be based permanently at Blakenall Dental Clinic, operating on Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5pm and on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays from 8.30am to 12.30pm.

A clinic would also operate at partime at medical centres in Brace Street, Caldmore, Darlaston Health Centre, Pinfold Street, and Park View Centre, Chester Road North, Brownhills.

Performance

A report to Walsall Council's health scrutiny and performance panel said moving the service would free up space at the Walk-In Centre for GP

space at the Walk-In Centre for GP services, provide more venues for urgent dental care, with free on-site parking.

The report states: "The opening hours, staffing levels and range of services available would not change as a result of the relocation.

"Subject to the health scrutiny and performance panel's confirmation the proposed move is not a substantial change, and therefore no formal consultation is required, the relocation of the Dental Access Centre could be carried out swiftly with no break in the provision of the service."

The move is set to take place by the end of the month if the panel agrees.

Three causes share £2,500

Walsall FC's conference and events department has donated more than \$2,500 to three worthwhile causes with cash raised over Christmas.

The department raised more during the many party nights which took place at the Banks's Stadium.

More than \$2,500 was raised through raffles and party games. Before the Saddlers clash with Rochdale, the conference and events department presented Walsall Breast Cancer Self-Help Group and Mayor of Walsall Councillor Gary Clarke's charity appeal with \$1,000 each.

A cheque for \$520 was also given to charity Sands. Julie Callaghan, conference and banqueting operations manager, said: "We are only too happy to help such worthwhile causes."

to help such worthwhile causes."
Walsall Breast Cancer Self-Help
Group is now in its 28th year. Wendy
Jackson, from the group, said: "We are
very grateful to Walsall FC."

Stalls still available on St George's Day

People can still take up stalls at a St George's Day community fair.

The Crossing at St Paul's, Darwall Street, Walsall, hosts the fair on April 23. Organiser Tony Kemshall said it was a chance to add some colour and atmosphere to a town centre event.

Space is limited so places should be booked early by calling 01922 645992. A £10 charge will help cover administration costs and the cost of the table.



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No lead notice to thieves

Persistent thieves have forced a doctor's surgery in Willenhall to put up a notice warning there is no longer any lead left to strip from the building.

Willenhall Medical Practice has taken the unusual step after being targeted three times as the stolen metal racket blighting the region continues. Lead has been completely stripped from the roof twice and padlocks taken from

The notice, on the outside of the building in Gomer Street, reads: "Attention. Please note there is no lead or any other valuable material on the roof of this building." Practice manager Jenny Smedley said: "We have put a special non-metal covering." on our roof now and put up this sign to stop it from happening

αβαιπ. Ine crimes are such an inconvenience to the patients, doctors and staff. The first time the lead was stripped from the roof, there was torrential rain and the surgery was flooded.

"Metal thefts are a problem in Willenhall. We know people who have had their door knockers stolen and the little canopies from above their front doors stripped."

lights as part of the transformation.
Council leader Mike Bird confirmed last thursday the axe for the event which attracted up to 250,000 visitors at its peak.
"Unfortunately the illuminations in the original format will not be resurrected," he said. The illuminations as we knew them were unfortunately running at a huge loss.
"There will be those who will be disappointed. It is the end of an era I am afraid, although popular it cant afford to carry on."

Suffering

Suffering

The last Walsall Illuminations was held three years ago when it emerged the show, which was launched in 1951, was losing £20,000 a year and suffering from dwindling numbers

numbers

numbers. It was temporarily scrapped for three years to allow for the park's restoration project.

A working party was set up to look at the future of the historic attraction. But following more discussions the council, which has to save a total of £65m in the next three years, decided the attraction should not return.

The revamp of the arboretum is to completed in 2012. The park's Grade II listed

The park's Grade II instead boathouse is being restored along with the bandstand. Councillor Bird added: "We are looking at the possibility of creating an illuminated park to highlight some of the key natural and built features within the

some of the key natural and built features within the arboretum such as the lake and bandstand. We are asking for illustrative pro-posals as part of a tender process."

Probe on bomb hoax

Officers are trawling through CCTV footage and carrying out foren sic tests in Walsall following a bomb scare that brought the town centre to a standstill.

a standstill.

A holdall with a container of fluid was discovered at the back of Job Centre Plus in a drama that brought out the bomb disposal team and police helicopter. Officers are now carrying out tests to see what the liquid was.

What Millends Dolice Snokes.

West Midlands Police spokes-

woman Joanne Hunt said investiga-tions were ongoing and officers were now searching through CCTV footage now sear for leads.

for leads.

Buildings were evacuated, roads sealed off, the bus station closed and trains disrupted when the bomb scare broke out at 1.30pm on February 28.

The drama brought the town centre to a standstill for six hours.

Police spokesman Brigg Ford confirmed it was a "hoax device of sorts".

70 arrests in operation to reduce crime

More than 70 people have been arrested and almost 30 houses raided for drugs as part of huge crime crackdown in Walsall.

Operation Intrusive kicked off in January and will run until the end of this month.

West Midlands Police revealed the latest figures as the operation reached its halfway point. In total, 72 people have been arrested and 28 homes raided for drugs. People have been arrested on suspicion of running brothels, money laundering, burglary, theft and possession of illegal drugs.

Successes have included a 90 per cent reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour in Caldmore and more than 24 people arrested for burglary and robbery in just one week.

Ch Insp Andy Bullman, from Walsall Police

robbery in just one week.

Ch Insp Andy Bullman, from Walsall Police
Station, said: "The police are tackling criminals but
we are also working on long-term solutions with our
partners to ensure that our community is protected

partners to ensure that our community is protected and served.

"Work has included local clean-ups, tenancy breaches, fitting Smartwater into premises across the borough and crime prevention projects, which have been delivered in schools and community engagement activities.

"I would like to take this opportunity to not only thank my officers and staff but also our local partners, including the council, fire, NHS, neighbourhood managers and social landlords.

"Officers across Walsall have been working closely with our partners to ensure we adopt a joined-up with our partners to ensure we adopt a joined-up

"Officers across Walsall have been working closely with our partners to ensure we adopt a joined-up approach to tackle community concerns."
Different police teams from across the borough have all played a part in the operation. Suspected brothels were raided in Ridgeway Court, Bentley, and Cannon Street, Coalpool, in the same week in January. CID officers arrested more than 24 people for burglary and robbery across Walsall in one week.

Weapons detector is used on pupils

Pupils at a Walsall school walked through a metal detector and sniffer dogs as part of a police crack-down on drug and knife crime.

Walsall police have thanked pupils at Frank F Harrison Engineering College. No drugs or knives were discovered at the Leamore Lane school.

were discovered at the Leamore Lane school.

As pupils arrived on March 1, they walked through a knife arch which detects metal objects and were also asked to walk past sniffer dogs.

Sgt Chris Jones, from Bloxwich police station, said: "I see the school as a big part of the community and officers have been deployed within the school to assist staff." Headteacher Jacqui Grace, said: "We have adopted a zero tolerance approach when it comes to people being found with drugs or weapons."

Youngsters create garden at school

Anew sensory garden has been created at a special chool in Walsall.

school in Walsall.

A team of 18 youngsters from Pleck Youth Club have helped make designs for it at Jane Lane school in Bentley. It aims to provide a new outdoor learning space for the children to enjoy.

The team, who are halfway through their Prince's Trust programme, have spent the last six weeks raising money to pay for the garden. Activities have included leg-waxing, cake-bakes and a raffle.

Erin's PA facing charges

A personal assistant to Brownhills supermodel Erin O'Connor is to go on trial accused of stealing more than £45,000 from her. Michelle Knox-Brown, who worked for the 32-year-old for more than three years, denies two charges of theft and two of fraud. Knox-Brown, 45 of Hackney, will appear at Kingston upon Thames Crown Court on March 28.

Blitz on

Three men were arrested and two trucks seized during a crack-down on metal thefts in Walsall. Two men were helping police with inquiries.

The men, aged 19 and 20 were arrested for

metal thefts

20, were arrested for trying to steal metal from the roof of Darlaston Job Centre.
The attempted bur-

The attempted burglary happened at the Pinfold Street site at 4.15am on March 2. Another man was arrested on suspicion of theft after being stopped while driving a lorry carwing scruy.

while driving a lorry carrying scrap.

Officers found a haul of suspected stolen copper, on Wednesfield Road, on February 28. The man has been bailed.

Police have now seized the vehicle and also reported the man to the Department for Work and Pensions for operating without a licence.

A second scrap lorry was also seized for having no insurance in Harry Perks Street on February 27.

The arrests come as police are out in force in

police are out in force in Willenhall as part of Operation Steel. The operation Steel. The operation is helping West Midlands Police tackle the growing number of metal thefts.

Drug raid arrests

Three people have been arrested following a

Three people have been arrested following a drugs raid in High Street, Bloxwich.

A 28-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of theft, possession of cannabis and suspicion of allowing the premises to be used for smoking cannabis. He is helping with police with inquiries. In the people have been arrested following a drugs raid in High Street, Bloxwich.

A 28-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of theft, possession of cannabis and suspicion of flowing the premises to be used for smoking cannabis. He is helping with police with inquiries.

A 21-year-old man was arrested for possession of cannabis and given a police caution.

A 20-year-old man was also arrested at the address on a no-bail warrant.

Officers can be contacted on 0345 113 5000.

The last illuminations were held in 2008 — the down's premier park.

Bridgnorth District Council hosted a Christmas display using lights borrowed from Walsall Council in 2009.

An agreement was then reached for this to continue for another two years.

The illuminations had a long history in the town with even the energy crisis of 1975 or fuel protests not enough to stop it.

In 1989 laser shows were added and in recent times the inclusion of children's favourities such as the man the park to flood, and the show had to be cancelled for one night.

The Illuminations had up to sixty thousand bulbs and required year-round planning.

Town's illuminations will not shine again

Walsall Illuminations has been axed forever after more than 50 years in the town. Fears over the future of the annual lights extravaganza, which has not taken place since 2008, were first raised a year ago but council chiefs insisted it would return.

raised a year ago but council chiefs insisted it wound reduct.

It has now been confirmed the big lights display will definitely not come back to the arboretum, which is undergoing a £7.5 million was all chronicle@expressandstar.co.uk

Walsallchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk

Arhoretum

Arhoretum

Guizei lander Mike Rind

Guizei lander Mike Rind

Arboretum lights are to be sold off

Lights and display boards from the axed Walsall Illuminations are to be sold to raise extra

money for the cash-strapped council.

The unwanted equipment is being made available to the likes of fetes and town shows to claw back cash now the event has been permanently

back cash now the event has occur permissions scrapped.
Walsall Council admitted last week that the annual lights extravaganza will never return despite previously insisting it would make a comeback once the Arboretum restoration was

comeback once the Fiberman Completed.

Now the light boards, which in recent years have starred children's television favourites Dora Explorer, Postman Pat and Scooby Doo, are being put up for sale

Villages

Council leader Mike Bird said: "We will be selling them off and looking for towns and villages who want them to put on a show or display. "There may be organisers of fetes and celebrations interested and we will be seeing if there are

any takers. The money will all go into the central

Laura looking to her laurels



Laura Santolamazza, 12, is aiming for the final of a ballet championship.

A young ballet star from Walsall is aiming to dance her way to the national finals after wowing judges in national finals after wowing judges in a competition. Laura Santolamazza impressed at the Wyre Forest championships last week beating scores of youngsters to win through to the next stage.

The 12-year-old from Aldridge has been doing ballet for five years and will now take part in the regional heat of

the All England championship in Sedgley in May. The St Francis of Assisi pupil is a member of the Liv-ingston Dance Academy in Wednes-bury and had to put on a routine lasting a couple of minutes.

She practices twice a week at the academy in Holyhead Road and after impressing with her first appearance at the week-long festival was called back to perform again last Saturday.

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victim of conmen

Thieves posing as water officials have targeted an 89-year-old widow in her Walsall home—as police revealed they are investigating 14 distraction burglaries so far this year.

Officers are warning the elderly and the vulnerable not to open their doors to strangers.

They are investigating links between the crimes, the latest of which took place in Pelsall on February 28.

which took place in Pelsall on February 28.

The 89-year-old victim answered the door to the two men, who claimed to be from a water company and told her the supply was off and needed to be checked in her property. Once inside, one man distracted her while another emptied the contents of two of her handbags. They fled after being disturbed by a neighbour.

So far this year, there have been five distraction burglaries in Pelsall and Shelfield, two in New Invention and one in Streetly, Blowwich, Leamore,

one in Streetly, Bloxwich, Leamore, Bentley, Moxley, Rough Hay and Pleck.
Walsall Ch Insp Sally Holmes said:

"Walsall officers and those from Force CID are working together on these

CID are working together on these crimes and we are investigating links. These offenders are preying on the vulnerable members of the community and we are now warning people not to open their door to strangers. Det Insp Phil Asquith, from Force CID in Bloxwich, added the bogus callers claimed to be from the water board, which does not exist. The burglars were two white men aged 25 to 30. One of them was wearing a navy anorak. Recently, thieves of similar description targeted two women aged 91 and 85 in Bloxwich and Darlaston. Call CID on 0345 113 5000.

£42,000 will fund project

A history project looking at life in a Walsall town from the 1930s to 1950s will go ahead after being awarded more than 442,000 of Lottery cash. Barlaston All Active will get 242,800 of Heritage Lottery Fund money for its Darlaston Back In Time project.

£42,800 of Heritage Lottery Fund money for its Darlaston Back In Time project.

The scheme will run for 18 months and will look at back at pre and postwar life in the town, including its famous factories, family life and the community spirit.

To celebrate winning the funds and to get the ball rolling, Darlaston All Active is to hold a launch event on March 11 at 7pm. Admission to the event, which will include old film footage, is free at Darlaston All Active, based at the old Garrington works in Willenhall Road.

Red Devils visit

Young football fans from Walsall took a tour of Manchester United's Old Trafford stadium. The club's Community Programme arranged the tour, which included the players' dressing rooms and the tunnel. Development officer Marc Wilkes said: "It's not a place they're able to go to every week and thou or to incredible burz." week and they got an incredible buzz from seeing the changing rooms and sitting in Sir Alex's seat."

Widow is | Ticket office closing

A train station ticket office in Walsall will close and others will have their hours slashed as one of the region's biggest rail firms cuts 130 jobs. Bescot Stadium train station office will close in June under plans announced today by London Midland. Passengers will instead have to use automated ticket machines. The firm says more than half of tickets are bought online or

year. This reflects the popularity of Walsall mainstream secondary schools."

Bells for purses

Police are handing out purse bells from their market stall set up in Walsall town centre on Wednes-days. The aim is to stop women shoppers becoming victims of

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using machines. Hours at Tame Bridge Parkway station are also being reduced. The office will open 20 minutes later at 6am Monday to Friday. It will shut at 5pm Monday to Thursday and 7pm on Fridays and will only open 8pm to 6pm Saturdays and 10am to 4pm Sundays. Walsall's ticket office will also open at 6am and shut at 7pm Monday to Thursday and 8pm on Fridays and Saturdays.

Hospitals in payout

A patient has been awarded a six-figure payout after medics at Walsall Manor and a Birmingham hospital did not detect he was in need of a spinal operation. George Hubble, from Balmoral Drive, Willenhall, suffered a prolapsed disc in April 2007 and irreversible nerve damage after the problem went undetected and was untreated in the essential 24-hour window. The grandfather-of-

three now has difficulty walking and has been left with debilitating bladder and bowel damage.

The 63-year-old settled out of court with Walsall Manor Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, who made no admissions of liability for failures in his care. Mr Hubble said he was not angry or bitter. I would be a liar if I said I wouldn't go back, it's totally altered my life.

Borough hit by 2,000 fly-tipping incidents

Council bosses have vowed to get tough on fly-tippers after new figures showed litter louts struck in Walsall borough almost 2,000 times in just 12 months.

Blackspots in Walsall included Doe Bank Lane in Great Barr; Bridle Lane in Streetly; Cartbridge Lane South in Rushall; Harrowby Road in Moxley; Fishley Lane, Bloxwich; and Back Lane in Aldridge.

Walsalchronicle@expressandstarcouk

The public made more than 700 complaints to Walsall Council in 2010 after tems including mattresses, tyres and furniture were dumped across the borough.

One in four children in Walsall did not get a place at theire preferred first choice of secondary school for this September, latest figures claim.

Nearly 900 11-year-olds missed out on the school they wanted, out off 3,451.

It has increased from about 800 last year, but the proportion of rejections has remained the same. Sero, the private firm which runs Walsall's schools, revealed 74 per cent of children were offered their first preference.

Just four per cent of parents did Blackspots in Walsall included Doe Bank Lane in Great Barr;

Dumping

It has increased from about 800 last year, but the proportion of rejections has remained the same. Serco, the private firm which runs Walsall's schools, revealed 74 per cent of children were offered their first preference.

Just four per cent of parents did not get an offer from any of their first, second or third school preferences. Some parents are expected to appeal the decisions after the letters were sent out.

Claire Lunn. spokeswoman for Claire Lunn, spokeswoman for Serco, said: "Secondary admission offers have been sent out by email and post.
"The number of children seeking and being offered a place in a school outside Walsall is down this

Dumping

Letters have been issued to warn people that if they are caught illegally dumping rubbish, they could face either a hefty fine or even a prison sentence.

Throughout 2010, council officers also visited more than 400 premises to make sure the owners were complying with waste regulations. They issued more than 130 enforcement notices to landowners to make them comply with the legislation.

Ten vans were also stopped on the road to make sure everything was above board and they were not going to illegally dump their rubbish. Fly-tipping incidents last year included rubbish being dumped at the Proffitt Street flats in Blakenall, and piles of bin bags, toys and bricks left from the derelict Railway Tavern pub in Cemetery Road, Darlaston.

The site is one of the most notorious fly-

schools."

Figures show most pupils in Staffordshire got their first choice – 93.3 per cent. In Wolverhampton, 82 per cent got their first choice and 92 per cent in Worcestershire. The areas with a worse rate than Walsall were Sandwell with 73 per cent and Birmingham with 69.2 per cent. the derenct Manway Tavern pub in Ceme-tery Road, Darlaston.

The site is one of the most notorious fly-tipping hotspots in the borough and last March tons of unsightly mess had to be

March tons of unsignly mess had to be cleared away.

Residents in Hawkswood Drive, Moxley, were also subjected to cars and vans pulling up and dumping everything from mattresses to building debris.

from mattresses to building debris. In Cartbridge Lane South, Rushall, thousands of pounds were spent removing rubbish from the area.

To report an incident of fly-tipping, call 01922 653344 or email control of the c

streetpride@walsall.gov.uk

umetable at a Walsali school.

Pupils at Pelsall Village School have been getting to grips with Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet — even holding a masked ball to help bring the story to life.

bring the story to life. Youngsters in years five and six at the Old Town Lane school have picked up drama tips and brought the story into the 21st century, with help from the Royal Shakespeare Company. Kate Spencer, the school's literacy co-ordinator, said: "This is a

new topic for us and we were a little apprehensive to how the pupils would respond to Shakespeare, but they have thoroughly enjoyed it." Staff helped the children get a little taste of the Italian setting of the

play by studying Italian landmarks and artists. The ball gave youngsters the chance to dress up and tuck into pizzas.

Year six pupil Jordon Knight said:
"I really liked all the work but my favourite activity was making the masks. The practical drama activities were dead cool though."

Manor's nursing review

A shake-up of nurse management has been carried out at Walsall Manor Hospital to avoid a Stafford Hospital-type scandal.

The hospital trust has now split its former chief operating post into two roles.

The new roles are for a dedicated director of nursing and an associate director. It comes just months after a staff review was carried out at the Moat Road hospital to make sure there were enough nursing staff to respond to patients' needs. Bosses said the changes were directly linked to the Stafford Hospital inquiry.

The Francis Inquiry's damning report into the level of care at the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust found nurse leadership was one of the possible factors behind the failings. Bosses at Walsall Hospital Trust said they had brought in the changes in a bid to "improve the overall experience of patients".

Sue Hartley, nurse director at Walsall Manor, said: "The quality of the care we provide to our patients remains a real priority for our hospital."

"The Francis Inquiry suggests pro-

tal."
"The Francis Inquiry suggests professional leadership should also be a high priority and this has been recognised here at the Manor as we ve had an associate director of nursing in post for months now, whose role and focus is to improve the overall experience for our patients."

Firm shares Rover work

Engineering firm Walsall Pressings is among businesses which have won more than £2 billion of supply contracts to help build the new Range Rover Evoque.

West Midlands-based motor giant Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) announced a string of supply contracts to more than 40 companies in the UK for its new Evoque, which is also set to create thousands of jobs.

Walsall Pressings in Wednesbury Road; Sertee in Birmingham and Coventry firm Kautex Unipart are among the big winners
Jaguar Land Rover chief executive Dr Ralf Speth said: "Jaguar Land Rover is a key player within the UK economy. We are the largest investor in automotive research and development and engineering in this country and as the announcement shows."

Factory ablaze in suspected arson

Around 40 firefighters took more than four hours to tackle a fire at a derelict factory in Walsall after a sus-pected arson attack.

pected arson attack.

The blaze was started at the former Legge Lock Company, Gower Street, Willenhall.

The factory has been vacant for seven years. Willenhall Station Watch commander, Tony Jackson, said the blaze was under control by about 2am.

He said there were reports that a

He said there were reports that a homeless man was sleeping in the building, but no one was found.

Great Results



Capulets cap it all at ball

Year five and six pupils at Pelsall Village School had a Capulet Ball as part of their Romeo and Juliet project. Front is Aaranni Duggan, aged 10, and Alex Evans, nine, leading the way. One of the greatest love stories ever written has been on the timetable at a Walsall school.

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Hunt on to find graffiti vandal blighting town

A graffiti artist who is blighting

areas of Walsall is being hunted after leaving their graffiti "tag" all over pubs, bridges, walls and cable

boxes.

The vandal has left the tag of "Bows" in Birchills, Caldmore, Walsall town centre and in Sutton Road.

Council leader Councillor Mike Bird has now declared war on the culprit, saying the mess left behind is blighting the borough and costing people money. The biggest piece of graffiti is on the former Three Crowns pub in Sutton Road and covers an area 6ft by 5ft.

Tags are also on the former Orange Tree pub in Wolverhampton Road, Birchills; on walls in Hollyhedge Lane, Birchills and a canal bridge and cable box in Sutton Road. Councillor Bird said he had also spotted graffiti in Caldmore and Walsall town centre. He said he was now going to report the widespread problem to the police.

Arrested

"If he wants publicity he'll get it—but it won't be the sort he wants," Councillor Bird declared.
"Whoever this is this is the scourge of

declared.

"Whoever this is, this is the scourge of Walsall. I have seen this vandalism in at least 10 different places in the last few days.

"I am going to pass the matter on the police and get this person arrested.
"I want to expose this person and find out who they are. This is criminal damage and we will not stand for it. We want a clean borough that we can all take pride in and this individual is ruining things for everyone."

one."

The graffiti is on a mixture of councilowned and private buildings, Councillor Bird added.

In the financial year 2009/10, graffiti vandals cost Black Country councils more than £290,000 in cleaning bills.

Yobs spraying paint have forced authorities to employ specialist teams and bring in offenders under court orders to do unpaid work to rid buildings of unwanted graffiti.

graffiti.
Total clean up costs amounted to £298,397 in Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton in just 12 months.





Ruined - the graffiti tag which bespoils the canal bridge in Sutton Road.



thechronicle

Consultation time over 100 jobs

Consultation has begun on the move to axe about 100 jobs at a private firm delivering education for Walsall borough.

Staff at Walsall Children's Service Serco were called into a meeting las week.

week.
Posts are at risk as Serco has to save
£7.5million on a contract with Walsall
Council. Consultation runs for 90 days, as
bosses liaise with at-risk members of staff. Workers were called into the main hall at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Road, Rushall. The renegotiation of the Serco contract is part of the council's bid to save £65m over the next three years.

More than 430 jobs are being lost by the More than 430 jobs are being lost by the council itself and it is also cutting back on services. High-level talks have been taking place between the council and Serco over the past few weeks over savings that need to be made on the contract. Serco employs about 450 people in non-

teaching jobs in Walsall, providing educa-tion and training services to Walsall's 119 schools and nearly 50,000 pupils. The organisation was awarded a £345m deal to run education services in the borough for 12 years back in July 2008.

It offers strategic management and leadership, as well as support in other areas including special educational needs, school organisation and finance and man

Blitz on crime 'a success'

A police operation to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour across Walsall has been hailed a

Operation Intrusive kicked off in January and will run until the end of this month. Successes have included a 90 per cent reduction in crime in Caldmore and more than 24 people arrested for burglary and robbery in just one week.

Police teams from across the borough, including response officers, CID and local neighbourhood officers, have all played a part.

CID headed by Det Insp Anthony Banton arrested more than 24 people for burglary and robbery across Walsall in one week and officers in Bloxwich on cycle patrol came across two men on the canal towpath in Green Lane who were laden with suspected stolen power tools – they were then arrested.

Ch Insp Andy Bullman, from Walsall police station, said: "Officers across Walsall have been working closely with our partners to ensure we adopt a joined-up approach."

Friends channel their efforts into swim

Six friends will venture into the deep as they make a world record attempt at swim-Channel in memory of their close friend.

Father-of-two Mark Rickhuss from Darlasto died of a heart attack in 2005, aged 41, while coaching a swimmer across the Channel.

Now his friends Paul Bates, 42, of Rushall, Walsall, Darren Dyke, 45, of Solihull, Richard 45, of Solinuli, Richard Brown, 48, Rob Cash, 44, Gary, 40, and Stuart, 38, all from Sutton Cold-field, will try to cross the channel in record time to raise cash in his

memory.

They will launch their relay attempt to complete it in under nine hours and 53 minutes—which they say is the profile and the say is the profile and the say is the say of the say in the say in the say of the say in the say of the say unofficial world record for a relay team – in July with a fundraising targe of £10,000 for the British Heart Foundation.

Paul said: "Mark was incredibly fit.

incredibly fit.
"Unfortunately he had a pre-existing heart condition, and it was waiting to happen.
"We will swim for one hour each until we reach France, which means we need to swim 3,400m each hour.
"Er switten number.

"It's quite an under-taking."



Ready for their English Channel relay swim to raise money for the British Heart Foundation are back left, Gary Edgington, Richard Brownjohn, Rob Cash and front left, Stuart Dugmore, Paul Bates and Nicky Alsop.





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Not much of a welcome in Walsall if you want to park

Dear Sirs,

The logic of our Walsall Councillors never fails to amaze me, if you wander around the town centre there are empty shops; our ancient and precious market is struggling; visitor numbers to the town are dwindling and what does our Council do? It discourages people from visiting.

If I was thinking of setting up a business and employing local people, the last place I would want to be is in Walsall, it seems quite obvious the council has a vendetta against the town centre businesses and those who work in Walsall. The reason I have come to this conclusion is rather than making the place welcoming, our Council are more or less telling our town's visitors to go telling our town's visitors to go somewhere else as we don't want

If you are daft enough to want

to spend your hard earned money in our shops and stores and give people in Walsall employment, then the Council are going to do a bit of highway robbery by charg-ing and fining you a fortune for wanting to park your car or for infringing some minor parking rule.

To make things worse, grey money collecting machines are springing up all over the place as even our on-street, limited time, free parking will soon be going and motorists, no matter how short a time they need to dash into a shop or store, will be inflicted with pay and display or pay and dismay – as I call it I care about our town and want to see it thrive. I want to see the market expand and return to the glory days I remember as a child and a teenager when the market ran from St Matthew's at the top

of the town to the Bridge and was packed with shoppers. I have ambitions that Walsall would be a place where people from far and wide would want to do their shopping here; enjoy our town centre pubs, restaurants and other facilities – not to give them the impression we don't want them if they drive and not herm blind few. they drive and rob them blind for wanting to park.

wanting to park. If elected to Walsall Council I will be pressing for lower parking fees, including free parking periods and a return to free Sunday parking. Nor would I penalise and close down any entrepreneur who offers the character parking in the town and cheapest parking in the town and undercuts the council. Let's make our "welcome to Walsall" signs mean what they say.

Derek Bennett, UKIP Branch Chairman, Walsall.

a charity challenge

Dear Sir, I am writing on behalf of the Meningitis Trust to encourage all of your readers who would like to readers who would like to take part in a truly mem-orable experience this year, by scaling the heights of the UK's

heights of the UK's highest mountains in 36 hours, to get in touch. We are running two 36 hour Three Peaks Chal-lenges (May 13-15 and July 8-10). Both will start off at Snowdon in North Wales. Partici-pants will then be taken North Wales. Participants will then be taken by coach to the bottom of Scafell in the Lake District – to trek Scafell in the dark! Finally the team will be whisked up to Scotland to climb the highest of the three mountains, Ben Nevis.

Over the past 13 years the Trust has run this event, over 700 participants have taken part, raising almost £900,000. If you would like more information, please contact me on 0845 120 4530 or email samantha p@men in ingitistrust.org.

Samantha Porter, Events Organiser, Meningitis Trust.

Taking up **Prepare for referendum** Lamenting over voting alternative restaurant

Dear Sir, On Thursday May 5, voters will decide who represents them in local elections across England. There will also be a referen-dum on whether we use the "first past the post" or "alternative vote" system to elect MPs to the UK Parliament.

Many of your readers will want to get involved in cam-paigning in the referendum and elections. This could be by setting up a campaign group

standing as a candidate or starting a political party.

It is important that people can get involved but they should be aware there are rules they need to follow. These are set out on our website:www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance and I'd encourage everyone planning to play an active role in the campaigns to check the rules.

Peter Wardle Chief Executive, Electoral Commission

LETTERS

Dear Sir, I wish to lament the demise of Walsall's last remaning Cantonese restaurant Mayflower. It shut in late January after some 20 years of business

Locally, there are now fewer and fewer restaurants – and none offer-ing Catonese cuisine. I feel the closure of is a sad reflection of the depressed economic times Walsall.

Concerned resident,

Wish list for trade in the coming year

Dear Sir,
Although December's heavy snow meant many
companies in the West Midlands didn't get the
Christmas trade they were hoping for, business confidence in the area seems to be on the up. A survey
that we conducted recently found that 46 per cent of
businesses are confident that 2011 will be a good
ver

businesses are confident that 2011 will be a good year.

When asked what is on their wish list for 2011, our poll found 76 per cent of businesses in the West Midlands would like to see increased demand from the private sector. And 46 per cent are hopeful banks will offer firms more assistance.

Access to skilled workers seems to be a key concern across the UK, with a third of businesses struggling to find workers with the right skills.

With the economy starting to recover it's vital that businesses in the West Midlands make the most out of the opportunities that are available to them.

Paul Lawrence, Head of Business Markets, West Midlands,
Virgin Media Business.

People facing hard times in need of help

Dear Sir, We broadly welcome the government's plans to simplify the benefits system. More than 13 million in the UK live in poverty, including more than three million children. Yet £16.8 billion in benefits and

million children. Yet £16 millions more that are available in charitable grants go unclaimed every year. Many who have used our Turn2us service to access benefits and grants, say before coming to us they were simply unaware of what they were entitled to. In these uncertain times it these uncertain times it is vital that those gen-uinely in need get help. Rob Tolan, Elizabeth Finn Care, Hythe House, London.

Do you have some-thing to say? Then write to Walsall Chronicle, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolver-hampton. WV1 1ES or email walsallchroniemail walsallchroni-cle@expressandstar.c o.uk. Letters are pub-lished at the editor's discretion and may be edited. All letters and emails must include a full name, address and contact number.

Build communi-tea through a cuppa Dear Editor,

I am writing to ask your readers to support "Communitea Week", a national campaign that uses the Great British brew to help tackle the problems of isolation and loneliness that thou-sands of older people face every day.

day.

By the end of last year, more than half of people over 75 in Britain lived alone, and sadly

over 1 million pensioners said they often or always felt isolated, with almost half considering TV as their main source of company.

With this in mind, we'll be helping combat loneliness by inviting hundreds of older people to join us for some tea-related fun, from tea dances to tea tasting sessions, which are taking place in Bupa care homes across the UK throughout the

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week of Monday 21 March 2011.

We also want others to pull together and host their own tea parties, inviting friends and neighbours to enjoy a cuppa.

Me're urging everyone to put on the kettle and contact someone they think may need their spirits lifting. Call the Communi-tea Week hotline on 0845 600 4622 or email communi-teaweek@bupa.com.





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Yellow lines aiming to solve parking problem

expressandstar.co.uk

Double yellow lines have been put in place to tackle bed parking near Walsall College which sparked dozens of complaints. Complaints flooded in to the council from residents and busi-

nesses about cars being parked on blind bends, grass verges and

nesses about cars being parked on blind bends, grass verges and a railway bridge.

It is believed the problem was contributed to by students parking on roads near to the Wisemore Campus—despite a car park being provided.

Yellow lines have now been painted in Portland Street, North Street and parts of Mill Street at a cost of £1,000.

Blakenall representative Councillor Pete Smith welcomed the scheme which he said should resolve road safety risks caused by illegal parking along roads behind the college where there is a back gate to the £65 million complex, used by visitors.

Crazy

"I'm pleased that these yellow lines have gone down because it will hopefully stop this crazy and dangerous parking that was taking place. I think the council officers have done a good job in sorting this out. I always try to give praise where praise is due," Councillor Smith said.

Bour Engles is mangaing director.

Smith said.

Roger Eccles is managing director of Eccles UK, which is based in Portland Street. He said: "We always thought there would be problems with parking outside our premises when the college opened and that's exactly what's happened." Walsall College said low-cost car parking was arranged for students on land in Portland Street and it actively remoted use of while transport.

promoted use of public transport.

It comes just a week before 19 streets in the town centre will have parking charges enforced, when pay and display machines go live.

Rachael is winner in ballet battle

A talented teenager from Aldridge is celebrating pipping thousands of other dancers to the post in winning an interna-

other dancers to the post in winning an international award.
Rachael Carrier, aged 14, won the International Theatre Dance Award 2011 for ballet, one of just eight categories won by audition with an initial 6,000 entrants.
St Mary's High School pupil Rachael, of Coppy Hall Grove, has been dancing since she was nine and said she was overwhelmed to have been picked.
She said: "I'm just really pleased and shocked, I really enjoy dancing. I would love to dance professionally when I am older."
Rachael attends Livingston Academy of Dance based in Holyhead Road, Wednesbury, as a pupil of dance teacher Debbie Morgan.
The awards ceremony was held at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester last weekend and Ra chael was awarded a \$250 cheque to further, her

was awarded a £250 cheque to further her dance career and a trophy commemorating her achievement.

Legion lolly

Shoppers at a supermarket in Reedswood Way, Walsall, gave £5,286.45 to a Royal British Legion collection over 10 days.



Rachael Carrier won the International Theatre Dance Award 2011 for Ballet.

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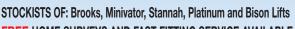
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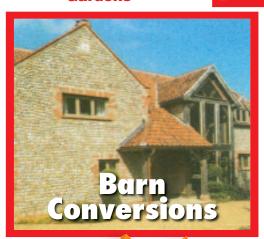


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Hospice opening eagerly awaited



The finishing touches to the new hospice are eagerly awaited by one Walsall patient who has to use a hospice 15 miles away. Ken Davies has spoken of the relief it will be for families in the town to finally have their own facility. Contractors are putting the finishing touches on the new hospice in Goscote Lane, Walsall, which has been wanted in the town for decades.

It will be open to patients in the

the town for decades.

It will be open to patients in the spring, and 71-year-old Ken Davies, of Rushall, who is being treated at St Giles Hospice, near Lichfield, said the Walsall centre will be "absolutely ideal" for the town's vulnerable.

Mr Davies, who was diagnosed with lymphoproliferative disorder, an incurable condition affecting his lungs, two years ago,

nas been treated for symptom control and pain relief at the Compassus Centre at the Whittington hospice.

The former Walsall Wood miner said: "St

Giles' nurses and doctors have done a mar vellous amount for me during my stay. I've never been in such an amazing place as this

before.

"To have somewhere like this in Walsall will be ideal. It's great to be able to come to the Compassus Centre and receive such good care, but it's often so difficult for families from the Walsall area to come over each day to visit their loved ones, particularly if they haven't got their own transport." He added: "When the new hospice opens in Walsall, it will be much more convenient for wisters to see their loved ones. venient for visitors to see their loved ones more often."

Residents' parking is blighted by fly-tippers

rubbish on residents' parks in an area of Walsall, prompting calls for action from angry residents. Six car parks in Caldmore are

Six car parks in Caldmore are being repeatedly targeted by flytippers, who leave bin bags, food waste, tree cuttings and cardboard boxes among other mess. Householders say they are at the end of their tether.

Landowner Walsall Housing Group have insisted it was working to drive away the fly-tippers.

The car parks serve properties in Whitehall Road, Victor Street, Watery Lane and Bescot Street.

Whitehall Road resident worker, said: "We rang up Walsall Housing Group and the council to come and clear up this car park.

"About a fortnight ago a truck was reversed in here and a load of tree cuttings were dumped off the back. Black and blue bags have been here for even longer.

"The site needs to be maintained

and blue bags have been here for even longer.
"The site needs to be maintained and the bushes are overgrown and are

watsaintininieeekplessaitusal.to.uk
taking up space where an extra car
could be parked."
Community action campaigner
Allah Ditta, of neighbouring Arundel
Street said the whole area was in need
of a tidy-up.
Mr Ditta, 52, said: "The council
twice organised clear-ups, but the
estate is in need of a long-term solution to these issues of litter, flytipping and car park maintenance."

Solution

Walsall Housing Group's director of housing services Rob Gilham said: "Our priority is to ensure our neighbourhoods are pleasant places to live and we clear any fly-tipping as soon as possible when we receive reports of rubbish being dumped.

"This presents a considerable cost to us and we would appeal for people who witness fly-tipping taking place to pass on as much information as possible so that appropriate action can be taken."

The Caldmore problem was revealed a day after figures emerged

taken."
The Caldmore problem was revealed a day after figures emerged showing fly-tippers struck at 2,000 locations in Walsall last year.



Allah Ditta in the car park

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utdoor centre owners need help

The owners of an outdoor education centre used by thousands of Walsall school pupils have launched an appeal for help. Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre had been threatened with closure after Walsall Council withdrew its funding for its

Recently its future had been secured until the summer at least after the Wide-horizons Outdoor Education Trust stepped in to run it on behalf of owners Walsall Camp Trust. But the owners insist people still need to come forward to support the centre and help secure its future beyond the summer.

Jim Crabtree, chairman of the Camp Trust, said: "Everyone who visits Bryn-tysilio is enchanted by the centre and its wonderful setting on a world heritage site.

"Ensuring the centre stays open and continues to serve the needs of the people of Walsall and the surrounding areas is

our number one priority. We are confident the combined efforts of Camp Trust and Widehorizons should help to ensure the future of Bryntysilio."

Anyone who can help, volunteer or donate can sign up to the "Secure the future of Brynty Campaign" by following the links on www. widehorizons.org.uk

The two trusts said they are working together to try to secure the centre's long-term future.

Work to improve homes

Residents in a block of

Residents in a block of flats where net curtains, plant pots and door mats were removed amid health and safety fears have been told improvements are on the way. A programme of work has been unveiled for St Thomas Close flats, Ryecroft, Walsall, after landlord Walsall Housing Group worked to identify areas for improvement after concerns were raised about the standard of decoration and flooring the substitute of the standard of decoration and flooring and the standard of decoration and the standard of t

Hard of decoration and flooring.

A draft schedule of work was presented to St Thomas Close Residents Thomas Close Residents Association recently. Work includes redecorat-ing communal areas, replacing flooring and entrance canopies and cavity wall insulation.

Some work has been done and the rest will be done throughout the year with redecoration in

with redecoration in October.
Ray Pendrey, residents association chairman, said they were very pleased with the announcement that work had been approved.
Councillor Pete Smith said: "I'm very happy with WHG's response to the residents' request for improvement."

Pet pamperers pick up popularity prize

A pet pamperer has had her salon for dogs and cats named the most popular business in Walsall.

m Walsall.
Sam Wilkes of Pampered Pets @ Sam's
Studio, Wolverhampto
Road, Pelsall was first
in the Best of Walsall competition after more than 1,100 nominations from customers also earned her third place in the national

contest. Mrs Wilkes, aged 40, has been in the groom-ing trade for 23 years and set up her own business 12 years ago. She said: "I am

absolutely delighted. I'm really glad the cus tomers have recognise

we go that extra mile.
"I grew up around pets, animals have always been my passion. "We've built up really

strong relationships with the customers, who we see every few

who we see every few weeks."

The Best of Walsall aims to back businesses in the borough. "We are really grateful to the Best of Walsall for supporting local businesses through this difficult economic time," said Mrs Wilkes, who also thanked salon manager Nichola Prime for her hard work.



Sam Wilkes and Nichola Prime from Pampered Pets @ Sam's Studio in Wolver-hampton Road in Pelsall with Lola the dog and George the cat

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thechronicle

College plans for old job centre

Anew business college catering for up to 80 students is earmarked for the site of a derelict Job Centre in Darlaston.
Up to 12 staff would be employed at the new College for Further Education, with the empty building renovated.
Plans for the specialist training centre in Pinfold Street have been lodged with Walsall Council and will go before councilors for consideration. The college would focus on accounting, business management, marketing and information technology courses during weekdays.
No parking spaces are planned but it is expected most students would live within walking distance and rely on public trans-

port. Architect behind the plans Stephen Walker said: "The premises have been empty and unused for over a year as suitable tenants have not been forthcoming. "Approximately 80 per cent of students will live within the Darlaston and Wednesbury area within reasonable walking distance of the building, and the remainder within the general Walsall area. There are no car parking spaces on the site and therefore the College will actively prohibit the use of cars by students."

"It is considered the refurbishment.

"It is considered the refurbishment, rejuvenation and reuse of the premises will assist the ongoing regeneration of

Darlaston and improve the visual amenity of the site which is becoming a dilapidated building on a major road." It comes as multi-million pound plans for a new leisure and retail park are also being lined up in nearby Darlaston Road.

The scheme could include shops, restaurants and leisure attractions on the old site of washing machine factory Servis UK. Around 150 workers were left jobless as Servis went into administration.

It was initially alanged for 293 houses

as Servis went into administration.
It was initially planned for 223 houses
and apartments on the land.
Servis UK fell into difficulties in 2008
and administrators were called in
October.

£15,000 bill over baked b lead theft

Damage caused by metal thieves after they climbed on bungalows in Brownhills to strip lead could cost £15,000, housing bosses said bosses

Repairs were needed at 21 properties in Valley View and Catshill Road following the overnight raid last month.

raid last month.

Roof tiles were
damaged and work is
now going ahead.
Housing officials estimate the total bill for
replacing lead with a
plastic alternative, scaffolding and manpower
will cost up to £15,000.

Cliff Horrocks, director of asset management, said: "It's not so much the said: "It's not so much the value of what was stolen; it's the overall cost of dealing with that theft, and when you add everything up, the figure is certainly substantial.

"There are numerous other knock-on effects besides cost; not least of these is the disruption."

Signs are being put up in the area to announce there is no longer lead on the roofs.

Dave has bean in the bath for 24 hours

A Walsall lorry driver pent 24 hours in a bath of aked beans to raise cash or Walsall's Acorns

baked beans to raise casin for Walsall's Acorns hospice.

Dave Thomas said he had so much fun, he would do it all again tomorrow.

The 43-year-old's friends and staff at The Bridge cafe, Heath Road, Darlaston, donned fancy dress and played music to help keep his spirits high as he took on his charity challenge.

A staggering 94 tins of catering baked beans were used to fill the bath, which was set up in the cafe at 7am on February 26 until 7am the following morning.

Mr Thomas, a father of Wilkes Avenue, Bentley kept everyone amused by dancing in the bath and even spinning on his head.

Mr Thomas hopes to have raised more than £500 for Acorns Children's thospice in Walstead Road. He was inspired to take on the mad-cap challenge after a close friend lost her son aged 15 and was given help and support by the hospice.

hespite.

He said: "It's a very good cause and they do some amazing work there. It was such a laugh I'd do it again tomorrow," he added.



Dave Thomas with, from left, Kelly Stacey, Emily Spencer, Stephen Harriman, Dave Aston, Elizabeth Harriman, Alex Aston, Debbie Budgie and Jaide Hollins.

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Noddy pops in for launch



Noddy Holder with art and design students at the Wisemore campus of Walsall College.

Former Slade singer Noddy Holder was given a warm welcome at Walsall 50 (Solega sa he celebrated the launch of a photography book for which he wrote the foreword.

The singer was presented with a copy of the book, The Real Walsall, showing photos of the town taken by art and design students at the Wisemore campus of Walsall College yestomore was supported by the control of the college of the college. Walsall since I was 16, which is nearly was 15, on the college. Walsall since I was 16, which is nearly was 15, on the college. Walsall since I was 16, which is nearly was 15, on the college. Walsall since I was 16, which is nearly was 15, on the college of the college. Walsall since I was 16, which is nearly over a go, but when I come back I still call it form. I still the more I still the more I still the college. Walsall since I was 16, which is nearly open ago, but when I come back I still call it form. I still the with the college of the college of the college. Walsall since I was 16, which is nearly open ago, but when I come back I still call it form. I still the the college of t the foreword.

The singer was presented with a copy of the book, The Real Walsall, showing photos of the town taken by art and design students at the Wisemore campus of Walsall College yesterday. He also signed copies for students at the weekend.

Noddy said: "I love coming back to Walsall. I have not lived properly in

Art and design student James Davison, aged 19, from Tipton, said he is a big fan of Slade. "I was really shy asking him for his autograph," he said.







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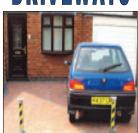


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Stan Ball centre to host first big event

A Walsall community centre is hosting its first major event this Sunday. The Stan Ball Centre, Abbotts Street, Bloxwich, is opening from 11am-4pm and stalls include bric a brac, toys and crafts and homemade cakers. Local artist Brenda Jenkins and charities includ-

ing the Polio Fellowship, the local Stroke Club and Over 50s Forum will also attend. There will be demonstrations and information relating to groups based at the centre, including art,

relating to groups based at the centre, including art, French, jewellery, sugarcraft, ballroom and sewing clubs. The canal side bistro cafe will be open.

Deb Brownlee, project co-ordinator, said: "This is the first time we are open for a large scale event and we are excited and nervous about how things will go on the day." There are still a few table spaces available at £10, or £6 for charity stalls and a children's face painter is needed for the day. Email stanballcentre@hotmail.co.uk or call 01922 403351.

Buildings to get guardians

Guardians have been appointed to look after empty buildings in Walsall to stop them becoming eyesores through vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Property company Ad Hoc Property Management and Walsall Council will manage a new pilot scheme which it is hoped will dramatically reduce the amount of cash spent on security.

Three former care homes – Sanstone House, Bloxwich, Meadow House Willenhall and Baytree House, Aldridge – have all been signed up.

Under the agreement, Ad Hoc finds responsible people to occupy the buildings at a below market value rent.

It is aimed at key professionals such as police and hospital workers and all have to undergo interviews and assessments.

Council leader Mike Bird said: "The arrangement with Ad Hoc offers several advantages when compared with the alternative of boarding up the site.
"A boarded-up building is an eyesore for local residents and advertises to everyone that it is empty, meaning it can frequently be a target for vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Permanent

"Twenty-four hour security can be very expensive and for a building like Sanstone House costs in the region of £8,000 per month but even the presence of a permanent security officers cannot guarantee full protection.
"Guardians are located throughout the empty property giving far better coverage

than a single security guard." The council does not pay money to Ad Hoc, who meet their financial targets through the licence fee which is charged to guardians.

Walsall Council does however retain responsibility for ongoing costs such as utility bills, rates and maintenance but figures show this will save the authority up to 80 per cent when compared to the cost of 24 hour security.

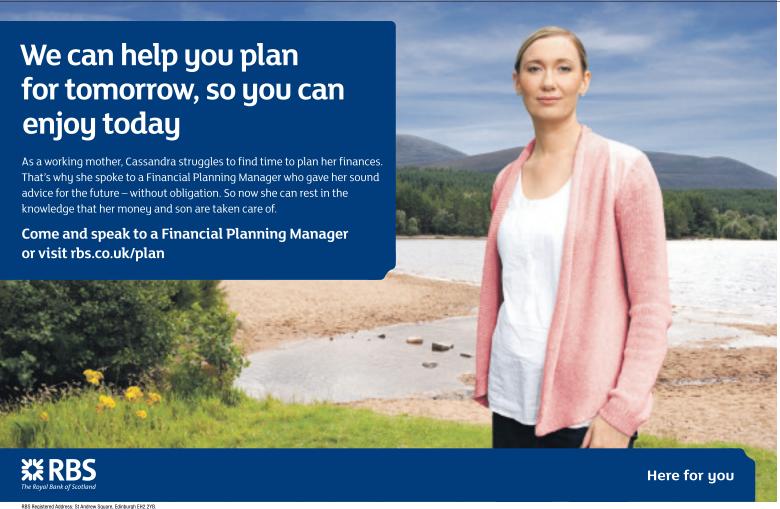
Darren Tubb, of Ad Hoc Property Management, said; "The costs of protecting an empty building quickly mount up putting up fencing, boarding up windows, installing CTV cameras or hiring security patrols.

patrols."
"Having guardians on site helps to breathe some life back into these empty buildings."

School staging open

day for young talent
Astage school in Walsall is hosting an open day for
young actors to sign up to their summer production.
ELB Workshops Ltd and Stageworks, will host the
free event on Saturday, from 10am until 1pm, in a
bid to encourage new members to join the cast.
The group's latest show, 'Little shop of Horrors'
will take to the stage in July.
The group which was formed in 2008 by Emma
Brain, provides performing arts training for children between the ages of 4 and 18 years-old.
Teaching the disciplines of dance, drama and

dren between the ages of 4 and 18 years-old. Teaching the disciplines of dance, drama and singing the school is run by a team of professional staff who have performed all over the UK and abroad. The open day will take place at Cooper & Jordan Primary School, The Green, Aldridge, where the classes commence every Saturday morning. Visit www.elbdanceworks.co.uk or contact Emma on 07812957140 or via email at stage@elbdanceworks.co.uk.





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Their highly acclaimed fifth album 'Come Around Sundown' became their third consecutive album to debut at number 1 when it topped the UK album charts on release, claiming both the biggest week one sales of the year and the biggest ever first week digital sales along the way.

Like last year's Hyde Park show, their forth-coming December 2010 arena shows sold out in seconds and the Kings of Leon's Summer 2011 concerts are set to be one of the highlights of



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Hospice friends help raise £3,000 A group set up to support Walsall ospice helped raise more than £3,000. Blowwich East councillor Kath Phillips elped form Walsall Hospice WS3 Friends roup in September 2009. As St disall Hospice, being built in Goscote ane, Goscote, nears completion, the roup is stepping up fundraising. Blowwich East ward with hospice supporters July Langford and her brother, Michael Fawdry. She said people were still dropping off \$20 notes or whatever they could give. The walk was significant as it was 16 years to the day since their mother died. "A hospice could have helped mum so involved call Councillor Phillips on 01922" involved call Councillor Phillips on 01922.

A group set up to support Walsall Hospice helped raise more than £3,000.

Bloxwich East councillor Kath Phillips helped form Walsall Hospice W38 Friends group in September 2009. As St Giles Walsall Hospice, being built in Goscote Lane, Goscote, nears completion, the group is stepping up fundraising.

With first natients due in weeks Council With Group was the council was supported by the council was supported by the support of the support of

With first patients due in weeks, Councillor Phillips raised £700 walking around

"A hospice could have helped mum so much in the final days of her life but there wasn't the facility for her then," she said.

involved call Councillor Phillips on 01922 479949. In the wider area call 0845 113 0678 to find out about fundraising.

on dance A Walsall Wood footballer who suffered an horrific head injury during a game five project

Dancers from Walsall re needed to take part in

Dancers from Walsall are needed to take part in a video project.
Sampad South Asian Arts will be at Walsall's New Art Gallery on March 27.
The group is looking for more than 100 people to be filmed dancing to a lively track.
It will then be posted on You'fube and shown at screenings and public events in the West Midlands.
Sampad is looking for people aged 12 and over to take part.
Volunteers can join in as individuals or as a group and will need to be free between 11am and 3pm on the day.
Piali Ray, director of Sampad, said: "Wer's really excited to be bringing Sampad dance dubt to Walsall."
To apply for a place contact kavita@sampad.
org.uk or call 0121 446
3260 by March 7.

But Mr Bilgimer said how when the was happy to be free between 11am and 3pm on the day.
Piali Ray, director of Sampad, said: "Wer's really excited to be bringing Sampad dance dubt to Walsall."

To apply for a place contact kavita@sampad. org.uk or call 0121 446
3260 by March 7.

Plea on cats | Beetle drive

The RSPCA is appealing for foster carers to take in stray or abandoned cats in Walsall. Call 0845 272 3570 or mail enquiries@rspca-person. Call 01922 email enquiries@rspca-walsall.org.uk person. Call 01922 684263 or 01922 682054.



Walsall Wood midfielder Torgut Bilgimer who is on the road to recovery.

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get set for digital

thechronicle

Dedicated Millie dies at age 103

A 103-year-old former deputy mayor who received an MBE for her dedication to Walsall has died. Tributes have been paid

Mrs Hadley dedicated her life to the borough, serving as a councillor, deputy mayor,



Comifers normal notice in circuit, and a stroke.

Walsall Council leader Mike Bird said: "Millie was a great servant to Walsall and we were all very proud of her achievements. She was known for working tirelessly for others, even well into her 90s and beyond. She served as chair and vice-chair at Alumwell School and always delighted in seeing the children succeed." children succeed."

Labour leader Councillor Tim Oliver added: "For

Labour leader Councillor Tim Oliver added: "For many years, Millie had been stalwart to the Labour group both before and after she served as a council-lor. "She will be sadly missed." The funeral arrangements have yet to be con-firmed.

A knit on the tiles will have them inn stitches

expressandstar.co.uk

In a corner of a Walsall pub gath-ered around a fire for two evenings a month is a sight many would not expect to see.
Instead of real ale

Instead of real ale drinkers propping up the bar and putting the world to rights at The Wheatsheaf in Walsall, a group of women are getting together to share their lifelong hobby – knit-ting.

The club, which aptly calls itself "Inn Stitches", gets together to socialise over homemade scones and beer as they get on with their knitting projects, given patterns and ects, swap patterns and help each other out if

they get stuck.

The idea was the brainchild of Sue Collingswood, aged 59, a teaching assistant and friend of The Wheatsheaf



Fiona Kells, Janet Hughes, Sue Tame, Jane Hardwick, Sue Collingswood, Sue Fawson and Jan Long-more get knitting.

teaching assistant and friend of The Wheatsheaf Iandlady Jan Longmore.

They set up the club in November not long after Jan took over the Birmingham Road pub, and about six who has also been knitting most of her life rifered it lives a month.

Relaxing

Sue, of The Crescent, said: "Thave always done it. Hove it, it's relaxing. I can't put the needles down now, once I get going I can't stop."

Anyone can see the evidence. Her bag is made out of knitted patchwork squares, and she is getting to work on knitting a pile of coats for battery hens, as they sometimes do not have enough feathers to keep warm if they are released.

She added: "There's such a lot to share,

Tardis on it, and it has to be prised off him now. "It's really satisfying to knit some-thing that you know somebody will enjoy." Sue Fawson, 50, a university lecturer, said she thought knitting was coming back into fashion.

Younger

She said: "I've noticed there are a few younger people doing knitting on the train now, it seems to be a thing they do in their spare time."

The name of the group, which Mrs Collingswood came up with suddenly at 3am one morning, is not simply a pun – the ladies sure know how to laugh together.

She said: "It really suits us, because we really are in stitches most of the time."

Huge review over borough libraries' fate

A huge review into the future of libraries in Walsall is now underway. The public will get the chance to have their say at meetings held with community groups, in questionaires and phone calls to 600 residents in the borough.

Campaigners have been protesting and petitioning about the borough's 16 libraries, worried they will fall victim to Walsall Council's 665 million cuts. People will now be able to have their say on the burning issues in a far-reaching consultation period that will run until April 10.

Council bosses have reassured residents no Walsall libraries will close in the next 12 months but the future is unsure after that.

Leisure chief Councillor Anthony Harris, said: This review is a chance for everyone, whether they use libraries or not, to let us know their thoughts on how we should take the service forward and ensure it meets the needs of today's society.

Decision

There are numerous ways people can have their

It meets the needs of today's society.

Decision
"There are numerous ways people can have their
say and I would like to make it clear that all the
information we receive will be used to help us reach
a decision."

The questionnaire, which is being distributed
throughout the borough, asks about the frequency of

visits; reasons for visiting; thoughts on access and opening hours; and whether additional services, such as travel pass renewals, should be offered in

such as travel pass renewals, should be offered in libraries.

Six hundred people will also be called at their homes to give opinions on libraries and meetings will be held with community groups. Findings will be reported to decision-making cabinet in the summer. Councillor Harris added: "I want to see everyone from children to students and pensioners using our libraries in the years ahead but to ensure we provide the service everyone wants we need to know people's thoughts." People can have their say via comment boards in borough libraries texting the words "walsall library" to 6003 and via letter at Library Consultation, Walsall Council, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 17P. The questionnaire can be found at www.walsall. gov.uk/library_consultation_2011

Cabaret night tribute acts

A Matt Monro and Nat King Cole cabaret dinner how will take place at Walsall's Banks' Stadium later this month. It takes place in Bescot Crescent on March 19 with tickets costing £30 including a four-course meal. For details, call 01922 651414.

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Backbending labour led to Humpshire nickname



he town hall, which became a library after the council was abolished

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Black Country are associated with one particular industry, and for Willenhall, it is locks.

Willenhall used to be a town of the black subject to the black.

lock makers, not just the large companies like Legge and Squire and Josiah Parkes, but small workshops, like the one which became the Lock Museum, where became the Lock Museum, where a handful of family members bent over their vices day after day, filing away at locks of every kind.

Jokingly, Willenhall used to be known as Humpshire, as it was claimed that all its workers developed humps from bending over their vices as they did, day after day. Pubs were said to have holes in their seat backs to accommodate their customers' humps.

Successor

Successor

Until quite recently, Willenhall had remained largely unchanged for over a century. Neither the German Luft-waffe of World War Two nor the indis-criminate redevelopers of the 1960s and 70s altered the warren of streets with countless small workshops and cottages, chapels, pubs and schools surrounding the odd large lockmaker like Legge.

surrounding the odd large lockmaker like Legge.

If Willenhall was taken from its Black Country setting and placed in a rural location, the prices of its quaint cottages in the myriad lanes would



By Alec Drew
rocket. Losing its independence in
boundary rearrangement and becoming part of its large neighbour, Walsall,
may even have delayed massive
change, as being neglected is not
always a bad thing.

It has been the demise of the town's
major industry which has seen the
start of new developments, old factories demolished and new supermarkets built.

kets built.
When I worked as a buyer in Nigeria, west Africa, in the 1980s, the local markets sold what were apparently Union locks, only a closer look at the box would reveal that it actually said "Unine" locks, or "Onion" Locks, with "Made in China" in very small letters.

Nowadays even the genuine Union locks are made abroad. The locksmith in the Nigerian town of Jos was proud, however, to say he had been trained in Willenhall, and was delighted to hear that I came from Wolverhampton next

that I came from wolvernampton next door.
Perhaps his successor will be trained in some Chinese "Humpshire".

◆ Alec Brew is looking for old photo-graphs of Chubbs Lock Company for a new book on Wol-verhampton indus-tries. E-mail alecbrew@ hotmail.co.uk or call 01902 759696.



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thechronicle

College helping scheme

Walsall college is working with trading standards officers to crack down on underage sales of cigarettes and alcohol.

alcohol.

The college, which has campuses in Littleton Street West and Green Lane, has recently signed up to the Validate UK proof of age scheme. It helps businesses make sure people are old enough to buy cigarettes and alcohol.

enough to buy cigarettes and alcohol.
Students have been issued with free proof of age photo cards and there has been a dramatic rise in the number of traders in Walsall asking for ID thanks to training from trading standards officers.
June Morrow, director of student journey at Walsall College, said: "Our students love it as it saves them time and

saves them time and embarrassment."

Evenings for entertaining

Aldridge Youth
Theatre will be hosting
two evenings of musical
entertainment this

Musicians from Aldridge School will take over the theatre, in Noddy Park Road, on March 13 for an evening of music from stage and

screen.
On March 25, actor,
pianist and racounteur
Guy Rowland will be performing his one-man

show.
To contact the box office, call 01922 458615 on Mondays and Thursdays from 7pm to 9pm and on Saturdays from 10.30am to midday.

Removal date for gantry

A controversial 35ft "eyesore" gantry over the M6 in Walsall will be taken down by the end of

May.
The gantry, which has been at the centre of a long running row, was installed ahead of the introduction of hard-shoulder running on the motorway and looms over homes near junction

 Nearby Beechdale estate residents say it has blighted their view. They were told last month, nearly a year after it was first installed it would be taken down and replaced with a single sign-

post to reduce the visual intru-sion for residents.

Campaigners flooded the Highways Agency with letters of complaint, demanded meetings with bosses and involved Walsall North MP David Winnick.

He also wrote almost daily to the agency about the eyesore. Mr Winnick said the news was a victory for the residents, who had also suffered overnight noise during the work to widen the

motorway.

He said: "The sooner it comes down the better. What was put up was totally unacceptable.

last 18 months.
"Those in Murdoch Way and surrounding streets suffered much misery from the constant noise of the construction, which

noise of the construction, which continued on occasions throughout the night, as well as all the other inconveniences.
"It is therefore to be hoped the new direction sign will be less intrusive than the existing gantry." Highways spokesman Anthony Aston said: "The gantry, ... will be taken down by the middle of May at the latest."

Pupils mass-sing for charity

Pupils at a Darlaston school have been belting out a favourite children's song for charity.
Children from Rough Hay Primary School, Rough Hay Road were taking part in the national Chatterbox Challenge campaign.
This project aims to bring together children aged under five to learn, have fun and raise money for children who struggle to communicate.

raise money tor cuildren who struggle to
communicate.

The challenge, in its
10th year and organised by children's communication charity I
CAN, was to break the
record for the largest
game of "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes".

It was performed by
children under five at
nurseries and schools
throughout the country
at exactly the same
time on Monday february 28 at 11am.
Teacher at the school
Reena Rai said: "It
went really well.

"I'm so proud of
everyone who took
part. There were 83
children and parents
who took part, it was
really fantastic."



Ben Garrington and Shamin Turay, both aged four taking part in the 10th Chatterbox Challenge held at Rough Hay Primary School in Darlaston.

Support event to find jobs

A jobs event featuring companies and organisa-tions will be held next week.

week.
Support Into Jobs will
be held at Darlaston
Town Hall, Victoria
Road, from 9.30am until
2.30pm on March 16.

2.30pm on March 16.

Among the exhibitors
attending the event will
be Age UK, Seetec, Royal
Navy Reserves, British
Army Recruitment,
Welfare Rights, Walsall
Adult & Community
College, Starting Point,
Family
Service, Shaw Trust,
Walsall
Disability
Forum, ENTA, Jobcentre waisall Disability
Forum, ENTA, Jobcentre
Plus, Workwise,
Prospects and Walsall
Council.

There will be informa-tion on job vacancies and advice t for people looking for jobs.

looking for jobs.

Walsall Council's regeneration chief Councillor Adrian Andrew, said: "These events are worthwhile as they can often help people to decide their next move."

For more information contact 01922 652593.







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staff who
co-ordinated
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perfectly

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of Walsall

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Miss Rae of Stafford



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I am very impressed

Mr Hemmings of Coventry

snappers claim to frame





The number 31 trolley bus in 1970s Walsal

This week's pictures are a mixed bag with A Martin of Walsall supplying pictures of the town's trolley buses; childminder Debbie Raheem from Tamebridge sent in a picture from one of her charges taken in the arboretum and Andrew Blakemore of Aldridge snapped a wintry scene on the canal.





The town's last trolley bus making its way through the streets

Snaps of life in the borough

Are you a snazzy snapper, a lord of the lens or diva of the digital print? Think you can do better than these pictures, if you can why not share your snaps of the borough?

There is no limit on the age or the subject all we ask is that they be as sharp and clear as possible and must be of reasonable quality for publication and of course feature some area or aspect of Walsall and its life. Send them in with your, name, address and contact number and a brief description of what the picture

shows.

Also we would like to hear about any interesting tales or stories attached to the photograph. Send them in either as a hard copy or electronically and we will do the rest. So get those cameras snapping, dig out those dusty old albums and send them to: Snappers Claim to Frame, Walsall Chronicle, Queen Street, Wolverhampton. W1 1ES or email them to walsallchronicle@expressandstar.co.uk.



The child Debbie Raheem was minding took this picture of crocuses

EDUCATION is a new dedicated section on expressandstar.com.

It's an unrivalled source of information including: local and national education news, a teacher resource centre offering; lesson plans, worksheets, educational games and videos, designed to bring fresh ideas to the classroom.

It's also the place to read e-editions of Express & Star supplements and gain instant access to many education vacancies throughout the West Midlands and Shropshire.



NEWS VACANCIES RESOURCES

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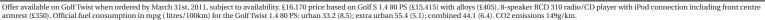
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Variety really the key for a Grand night out

will provide plenty of variety for audiences at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre this

Month.

After a triumphant run at the Grand in 2010
the Russian State Ballet of Siberia returns to present one-off performances of The Nutcracker on
Sunday March 20, Romeo and Juliet on Monday
and Swan Lake on Tuesday.

and Swan Lake on Tuesday.

These performances are nearly sold out so ballet fans need to book quickly.

On Wednesday March 23, Beyond the Barricade returns by popular demand. The show recreates West End and Broadway musical hit songs with amazing authenticity, featuring a cast of past principal performers from the West End production of Les Miserables and the 25th anniversary concert at the 02.

The production includes songs from Miss Saigon, The Lion King, Phantom Of The Opera, Love Never Dies, Mamma Mia, Blood Brothers, The Jersey Boys and many more hit musicals, ending with a spectacular Les Miserables finale.

The innovative and exciting Opera della Luna

The innovative and exciting Opera della Luna

make their first visit to Wolverhampton with their acclaimed production of Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore on Thursday March 24.

Eight multi-talented singer-actors become crew, chorus and principals in a brilliantly fast and hilarious production of the comic opera.

Packed to the brim with toe-tapping tunes, the wit and verve of this production will prove beyond doubt that Opera della Luna have established themselves as one of the country's leading exponents of operate and comic music-theatre.

Contemporary

Circus Of Horrors is back on Friday March 25, rockin' and shockin' with the Four Chapters From Hell, a fang-tastic new show to celebrate its 15th bloody year. It is performed by a mighty cast of 26 of the

wildest, weirdest and greatest contemporary circus artistes and musicians this side of the flaming

Audiences should note the show contains nudity and some adult content and is not suitable for children.

r children. That'll Be The Day, the UK's most successful

25th anniversary show on Saturday March 26.
Trevor, Gary and the gang return with the show's greatest hits, featuring the most popular

Trevor, Cary and the gang return with the show's greatest hits, featuring the most popular feel-good comedy routines and favourite hits from the 1950s, 60s and 70s which have been performed in the show over the last 25 years.
Finishing a week of one night performances is John Hylton, Europe's foremost Neil Diamond tribute performer, and his talented band.
Join them on Sunday March 27 as they celebrate the music of Neil Diamond's The Jazz Singer. Get ready to enjoy all the songs from the classic album, as well as a selection of Neil's other well-known hits.

Siberian Ballet, March 20-22, £13.50-£31; Beyond The Barricade, Wednesday March 23, 7.30pm, £11.50-£21.50; Circus Of Horrors, Friday March 24, 7.30pm, £17.50-£21.50; Circus Of Horrors, Friday March 26, 7.30pm, £8.50-£21.50; Read Diamond: The Jazz Singer Tour, Sunday March 27, 7.30pm, £16.50.
Contact the box office on 01902 429212 or visit www.grandtheatre.co.uk

www.grandtheatre.co.uk



Manics take to the road

Manic Street Preachers have announced details of a small UK arena tour, which will take place in May, which includes a performance at the Wolverhampton Civic Hall.
The band will play a total of three dates at Llandudno Cymru Arena on May 18, Wolverhampton Civic Hall on May 19 and the Cardif CIA on May 21.
Manic Street Preachers are set to release the title track from their latest album Postcards From A Young Man as a single on Monday
Bassist Nicky Wire said: "It will be a great warm up for the festival season and a perfect way to end what has been

Bassis Nicky Mre Saut. It will not a great will in Up in the festival season and a perfect way to end what has been a brilliant campaign for Postcards From A Young Man." Tickets for their UK dates are on sale now. Tickets to see them in Wolverhampton cost £27.50 and are available from the Midland Box Office on 0870 320 7000 or online at www.wolvescivic.co.uk

Ascerbic comic to bring wit to Slade audience

Comedian and writer Simon Evans, star of BBC One's Michael McIntyre's Comedy Roadshow, is bringing his critically acclaimed show Fringe Magnet to Wolverhampton.

The show sees Simon return with another hour of his trademark ironic wit.
Following a well-

Following a well-received 2010 Edinburgh Fringe run, Simon's star is very much in the ascendant.

His performances have won praise from comics and critics alike, prompt-ing reviewers to describe him as 'demonically dry' (Metro) and 'sublime' (The Guardian)

Sharp

In 2005 Simon was hon in 2005 Simon was hon-oured as one of only three British comics invited to perform at the prestigious Aspen Com-edy Festival, alongside Stewart Lee and Eddie Izzard. His aloof charm and

sharp tongue promises a top evening's entertain-ment.

ment.
The show is taking place in The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, on Thursday, April 14.
Tickets cost £12 and are available from the Midland Box Office on 0870 320 7000 or online at www.wolvescivic.co.uk
For more information

For more information visit www.simonevans comedianetc.com



John Kelly, Mike Lea, Jack Gregory, Richard Butter and Alan



Bob Marshall, Chris Rigby, Steve Murphy, Geoff Armstrong,

Lunch boost for rugby club's building scheme

Newport Rugby Club's vice presidents and guests. The lunch dents' lunch before the Peterborough game was supported by 78 ex-players, life president's blazer to Kneale Arm-



John Roberts , Bryn Roberts, John Masters and John Biggin.

made by president Steve Woodhouse and chairman Andrew Watson Jones.

Woodhouse and chairman Andrew Watson Jones.

The rugby club holds six funcheons each season, which are an important boost to the club's fundraising and to promote the Friends of Newport Rugby Club campaign to fund the clubhouse improvements planned to start next year.

Steve Woodhouse said:
"We have already gained strong support for the scheme from supporters to contribute £10 per month for 36 months. If we achieve our target of 200 Friends this would fund almost half of the development costs.

"We are also launching a sabore of a local business."

"We are also launching a scheme for local businesses to become a friend of the club and each member is then given a window or wall sign to display their support."



John Burpitt (Peterborough) John Honock, Chris Wilde, Lorna Burpitt (Peterborough), Brian Fos-ter, Dave Gittus, Steve Woodhouse, John Briggs, Dave Turner, Ray Price.

star **EXTRAVEL**

KINGS OF LEON

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Kings of Leon have announced details of a series of huge headline outdoor shows next Summer including an eagerly anticipated gig in Coventry.

Their highly acclaimed fifth album 'Come Around Sundown' became their third consecutive album to debut at number 1 when it topped the UK album charts on release, claiming both the biggest week one sales of the year and the biggest ever first week digital sales along the way.

Like last year's Hyde Park show, their forth-coming December 2010 arena shows sold out in seconds and the Kings of Leon's Summer 2011 concerts are set to be one of the highlights of next year's live calendar.



- A General Admission ticket with a face value of £45 for an evening performance of Kings of Leon Live 2011 at the Ricoh Arena, Coventry on the 30 May 2011

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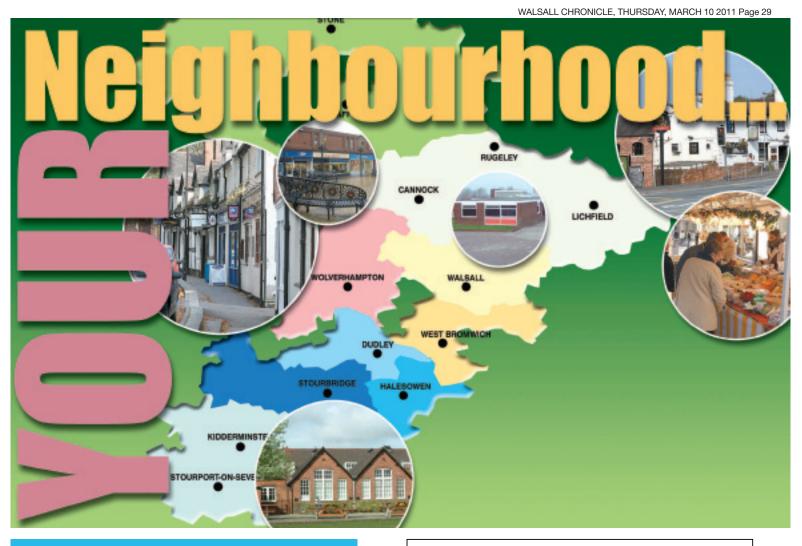
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YOUR Neighbourhood...

Mums: Make it happy returns back at work

your job open for you, going back to work after maternity leave or a longer break can often be a bit difficult and uncomfortable, but there are ways you can make it a happy return.

happy return. You want to arrive at work cheerful, calm and unflustered, but you'll probably have more to do before you get there than most of your colleagues do in a week! Cut down on stress by making a plan for each stage of your first morning, from getting yourself ready, to dealing with child care, to getting to work and the things you need to do when you get there. If your childcare arrangements are new for you, or for your child, try to have two days ahead of time when you try out the routine, even if it's only for a half day. Use the time while your child is being minded to organise other things, such as travel arrangements and work clothes. If you're still feeding and plan to express breast milk at work, this is a good time to try out any equipment to make sure it works well and that you're comfortable with it. Going back to work can be exhausting, especially if you are still not getting a full night's sleep, and if your little one is not adapting well to being with a minder. Arrange things at home to minimise the pressure, allowing yourself a ready meal or take-away toward the end of the week when you're tired, and not planning too much for the weekend. want to arrive at work cheerful, calm

you're tired, and not planning too much for the weekend.

Important

Even though you may feel as though you're being pulled in 100 different directions, it's important to grab yourself some time to relax alone at least once or twice time to relax alone at least once or twice somewhere in your week. This could be taking a proper lunch hour from work to sit in a proper cafe, with a proper cup of coffee and a Panini and the paper. Or, it could be arranging to work for one hour less one day a week so that you get to go for a swim on your way home.

Remember that working mums need treats. Returning to work shouldn't simply be a meaningless grind – it should be a time

when you are valued for everything you are – so start by valuing yourself.
Looking your best can really boost your confidence, so decide what you're going to wear, not just for your first day, but for the rest of the week, and ironed. Try everything on. Even if you're back to your pre-pregnancy weight, your body may have changed shape in various places, and your first morning is not the best time to find this out!
First days, just like interviews, are an ideal excuse for some outfit and make up shopping.

outfit and make up shopping. Make an appointment for a haircut, too – if you look good, you'll feel good.

Ticket

Ticket
If you're using public transport
to get to work, check that everything still runs the way it did
when you last used it. Routes
and timetables may be different
itcket arrangements change (for
instance, more bus companies
insisting you buy a ticket from a
machine before you get on a
bus). bus).
Check there are no diversions

Check there are no diversions or replacement services you'll need to allow time for (the bus or train companies' web sites are often good for this – or give them a ring). Buy your ticket or pass ahead of time, including any parking pass, for a week or a month if you can, to avoid Monday morning

If you're using your own car, this is a good time to clear out all the rubbish accumu-lated over the summer. Your colleagues may not see inside your car, but you won't want unplanned things sticking to your uniform or

unplanned tinings sucking to your unionned work outfil!

Lots of things in your workspace may have changed while you've been away: where people sit, where stationery and equipment are kept, where the printer and the coffee machine are.



It is possible to combine working with being a mum

someone may even be sitting at your desk, or next to your closest colleagues. Don't let yourself be fazed; you'll slot back in and i'll all feel familiar again soon. Nab close friends or colleagues during coffee break, and get them to fill you in on any office gossip you need to know so that you don't trip up and get embarrassed when talking to people – for instance, bereavements or marriage break-ups that you should be aware of.

Returning to work can be a difficult decision to make and while no-one but you - and your family - can make the decision, there are other mums you can chat to and share your worries.

your worries.
Information fromwww.netmums.com

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YOUR Neighbourhood.

Students home in on ways to keep in touch



Students now have new ways of updating their parents

TUDIES show that tech-savvv students flying the nest for the first time are more connected to

home than ever

home than ever
Thousands of young people fly the nest
each year for university and a study by
insurers Endsleigh has revealed that the
internet has changed the way that the
youngsters and their parents keep in touch
According to the study, parents rely
heavily on social media platforms like Facebook to keep tabs on their children once
they've left home, with many admitting to
regularly checking their profiles to see what
they've been up to.

Messages
However interestinaly, only about a third

Messages
However interestingly, only about a third of the 18-25 year olds surveyed are actually friends with their parents on Facebook and almost 60 per cent deliberately choose not to be as they do not want their parents seeing personal pictures and messages. The study also shows that 67 per cent of 8-25 year olds who have left home now use the internet to communicate with their parents – 31 per cent via email, 28 per cent use social media and 8 per cent Skype. Mobile phones are almost as popular to keep in touch, with 65 per cent using their handsets to call home and 63 per cent to send text messages to their parents.

nancies to cain none and so per cent to send text messages to their parents. Perhaps unsurprisingly, only 11 per cent of young people use post to keep in touch with their parents, which has reduced con-siderably from previous generations - 19 per

Internet has changed way that young update their parents on university life

cent of 45 plus parents surveyed in the

cent of 45 plus parents surveyed in the same study used post to stay in touch when their parents when they first left home. When it comes to working out how to do basic household tasks, young people are becoming increasingly independent and self-reliant, with 49 per cent of 18-25 year-olds choosing to use self-help websites such as YouTube or VideoJug to find out how to boil an egg, work a washing machine or iron a shirt, compared to only 19 per cent contacting home.

However despite the rise in usage of the internet and social media, young people are getting more homesick than ever - 70 per cent of the 18-25 years surveyed confessed to missing home when they first left, compared to 61 per cent of those 45 plus who were asked the same question about when they first left home.

Young people still need the emotional support of parents, with 70 per cent confessing that the main reason they contact home is for a general catch up.

Surprisingly, only 11 per cent of the young people survey contact home to ask for money.

Commenting on the findings, Relationship Expert Christine Webbe

Commenting on the findings, Relationship Expert Christine Webber said: "These days parents are becoming less anxious about their kids flying the nest as there are so many different ways to keep in touch, but they must be careful not to invade their privacy by checking up on them too much. "However it seems nothing can replace the comfort of the human voice, which is why so many students still need to ring home for a regular catch up."

Aaron Porter, NUS President added: "The internet and social media have become indispensible tools for students for both study and for life, but they are clearly no substitute for human contact at what is often a time of upheaval, during which many feel homesick.

"Access to a computer or laptop is increasingly becoming essential as a way of keeping in contact with family, so it is all the more important that those essential items are protected.

"Parents can often help achieve peace of mind by ensuring insurance cover and antivirus software are covered, reducing worry at an already stressful time."



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Willenhall

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TUESDAY

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Morning Group Tuesday 9.45am Contact: Vicky 07894 277072

BLOXWICH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Elmore Row Centre, Elmore Row

Tuesday 5.30pm & 7.15pm Contact: Vicky 07894 277072

DARLASTON METHODIST CHURCH Slater Street

Darlaston Tuesday 7.00pm Contact: Jackie 07973 927364

ST ANDREWS CHURCH HALL

ST ANDREWS CHURCH H/ Wolverhampton Road West - Corner of Churchill Road Bentley Tuesday 5.30pm & 7.00pm Contact: Liz 01902 351280

WEDNESDAY

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ST MICHAELS CHURCH HALL Church Road - on Pelsall Common

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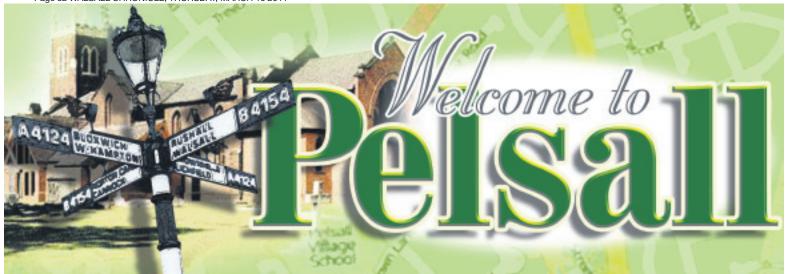
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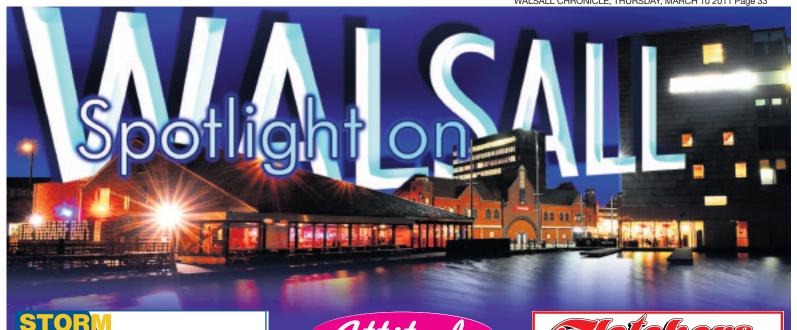
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- Can you keep your own doctor?
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- Can your religious or cultural needs be met?
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Taking time to choose your care package is so important

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care package is so important

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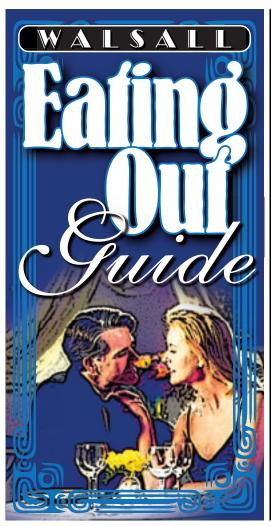
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Eliza hopes to do a lot

ONE of the brightest British pop breakthroughs of 2010 was the delightful Eliza Doolittle with her self-titled debut album, which was back in the top 10 last week despite being released last summer. Her breezy freewheeling retro pop has more hooks than a fishing tackle shop and the latest track to be released as a single – Mr Medicine – follows the success of Skinny Genes and Pack Up.
Real name Eliza Sophie Caird, the 22-year-old is the grand-daughter of Sylvia Young, famous for her London theatre school. Her father, John Caird, is a director with the Royal Shakespeare Company and her mother, Frances Ruffelle, was the original Eponine in West End blockbuster Les Miserables. So there must be something in those genes, skinny or otherwise.

In the auturnn she achieved that rare feat for a support act at Wolverhampton's Civic Hall when she got a full house for her short set before headliner Paloma Faith, and the London-born singer and model will have a capacity audience again when she performs at the city's Wulfrun Hall on Saturday, April 2.



Jaques Burnel (born in London to French parents) as singer and bassist, keyboardist Dave Greenfield and 72-year-old drummer Jet Black, with Baz Warne, singer and guitarist with the band since 2000. They are in concert at Birmingham's OZ Academy on March 19. Their former frontman, Hugh Cornwell, is also on tour soon playing Wolverhampton's Slade Rooms on April 15



TV listings start - page 40

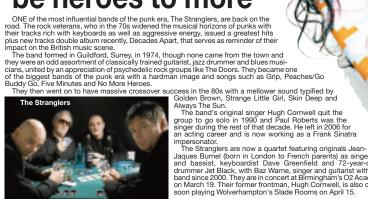
YOUR EIGHT-PAGE **ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE AND WEEK'S TV VIEWING**



Theatre and show round-up - pag



Matt busts into dance - page 39





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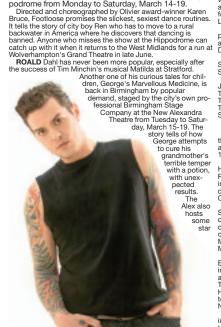
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Matt busts into dance musical leading role

MATT Willis, singer from pop group Busted and I'm A Celebrity winner, will headline his first national theatre tour in Footloose The Dance Musical playing the role of Chuck when the show can be seen at Birmingham Hippodrome from Monday to Saturday, March 14-19.

Directed and choreographed by Olivier award-winner Karen Bruce, Footloose promises the slickest, sexiest dance routines.



Matt Willis is to headline his first national theatre

name one-nighters. These include The Solid Silver 60s tonight (Thurs) which is to feature The Merseybeats, Wayne Fontana, Chris Farlowe and The Crying Game hit-maker Dave Berry. Cornish comedian Jethro brings adults-only humour to the venue on Sunday. Showbiz star Joe Longthorne will be singing at the New Alex on Monday. Next weekend the theatre hosts former Supreme Mary Wilson with very special guests The Chi-Lites on Sunday, March 20.

Weish National Opera complete their run at Birmingham Hippodrome with Verdi's passionate tragedy II Trovatore tonight and on Saturday. In contrast, they present the comic operetta Die Fledermaus, by Johann Strauss II, tomorrow (Fri).

Alistair MacGowan will be the Pirate King when Gilbert and Sullivan's The Pirates of Penzance gets a concert airing at the Symphony Hall in Birmingham on Sunday night.

Catch a rising star when Birmingham Conservatoire present Janacek's opera The Cunning Little Vixen at The Crescent Theatre in Birmingham from tonight to Saturday. Meanwhile, The Crescent's own company stage the comedy Women On The Verge of HRT in the Sheepcote Street theatre's Ron Barber Studio to Saturday.

Cunning

Wolverhampton Musical Comedy Company present one of the first amateur productions of Disney's High School Musical at the Wolverhampton Grand from Tuesday to Saturday (March 15 to 19). Cranford continues until Saturday.

15 to 19). Cranford continues until Saturday. Icarus Theatre's fast and frenetic version of Shakespeare's Hamlet is at Wolverhampton's Arena Theatre tonight. Maggie Fox and Sue Ryding spoof the Brontes in Lip Service's Withering Looks at the Arena tomorrow (Fn). Bertolt Brecht's classic drama about civil war and sacrifice, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, is staged by Blackeyed Theatre at the Arena on Monday. Then on Tuesday London Classic Theatre visit the Wulfruna Street venue with the brutal love story After Miss Julie, relocated in Patrick Marber's version to an English country house on the night of Jahour's landslide victory in 1945. Another

cated in Patrick Marber's version to an English country house on the night of Labour's landslide victory in 1945. Another classic, John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, is presented by Mind The Gap at the Arena on Wednesday and Thursday, March 16 and 17.

Talawa Theatre Company look at what it means to be young, British and black in Krunch tomorrow and Saturday at The Drum in Aston. Further afield, Shaun The Sheep stars in his own music and dance extravaganza at Stoke's Regent Theatre to Sunday. Then the Russian State Ballet of Siberia will be in residence in Hanley from March 17-19. They then move on to Wolverhampton's Grand from March 20-22 with a programme including The Nutcracker, Romeo And Juliet and Swan Lake.

Comedy highlights include Terry Alderton at The Slade Rooms in Wolverhampton tonight; Ed Byrne at Dudley Concert Hall tomorrow (Frij: Simon Munnery in The Slade Rooms on Saturday; Canadian Tom Stade at the Wulfrun Hall on Tuesday; and Ed Byrne is back for a gig at Birmingham Town Hall on Wednesday.



High note as young group to net a first

THE youthful team at Wolverhampton Musical Comedy Company (Muscom) are one of the first amateur companies to stage Disney's High School Musical. The story about sweethearts Troy and Gabriella, whose love threatens to disrupt the American high school status quo between basketball "jocks", science-loving "brani-acs" and budding stars of the drama club, has yielded two hit Disney movies and albums.

Holly Stringfellow from Perton will play Gabriella Montez and Tye Harris, of Dudley, will be Troy Bolton. Tye, aged 19, is currently studying for a Drama and Performance degree at Wolverhampton University. This is the first time he has performed with MUSCOM.

The show is to be staged at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday, March 15 to Saturday, March 19.

Rivals

Rivals

Their rivals in the musical, Sharpey Evans and her brother Ryan, will be played by Kimberley Robinson, of Codsall, and Pip Harper from Wednesfield.
The show features hit songs Start Of Something New, When There Was Me And You, Bop To The Top, Getcha Head In The Same, Breaking Free and We're All In This Together.
It will be interesting to see how Muscom's production stands up against the professional version which was a sell-out success at the Grand three years ago.
Tickets are priced from £5 to £17 (concessions available). Contact the box office on (01902) 429212 or online at www.grandtheatre.co.uk



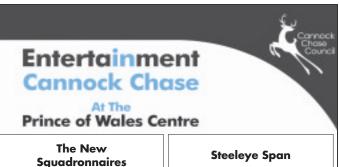
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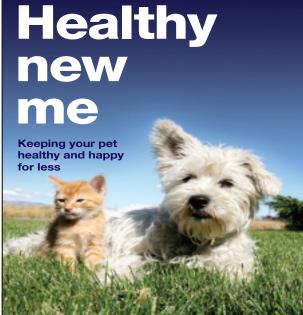
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Friday 1st April • 7.30 pm

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Saturday





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Choice



TAKE ME OUT

ITV1, 9.05pm

Modernicky Cupid Packly McGuinness has strucktelly gold with his neon-fit, overthe-top, basely dating game show it's a pre-pulls guilty pleasure of a Saturday evening, as he attempts to match-make among come of the nations carried singletons. For the uninitiated, a bloke stanck For the unwritched, a Hobel danke in front of a gaggle of 30 (mostly) gargeoue, divisionly later and does everything he cannot stop them extinguishing their lights and bowing out of the numbing in the race to win his heart. After much probable embarrassment, the leading lady is chosen, and the newly formed couple heads off to the island of Fernandos, hoping thereil be more than just mosquitos in the air.

9.66 Breekfact 19.66 Schriche Kitchen Lize 19.46 Raymord Blamok Kitchen Scoret. 19.66 BSC Niewa Begiond Niewa Weather, 19.67 Schrift Focus 19.67 Schrift Focus 19.67 Schrift Focus 19.67 Schrift Focus World Olympio Decrue From Thames to Tigria (F) 2.66 Live Six Nitione Flagly Union 19.46 Live Six Nitione Flagly Union

ine Ser Nationa Registration

9.55 BBC Hower Registrat
Howe; Werther:

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Bellet The defination
compete infront of
judges British House,
Miranda Hart and Louis
Spense, hopingto
imprece viewers who
decided the winner. Last
in the cories.

400 The Helband Lettery:
Secret Registra, A
brother and cicter take
part in the high-tenden
quis glow precented by:

quiz ahow precented by Nick Knowled in which contectants have the opportunity to win £ 100,000.

opportunity to win 2 to 0,000.

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100 BBC Howey Vertiber.

101 The Residual Programmen.

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445 SgmZone: Hicken Treasures of Australian Art. (R) 248 Horizon Are We Still Euching? (R) 448 100 Years of the London Palacium (R) 9.49 BBC News

e.se CBookies. The CBBC.

1.1. Sky at hight (F) 1.1. See Ecoup to the Country (F) 1.1. See First The Culture (1445) Western starting the late Jane Russel.

2.1. Shore. 1242 Chardes How to Read Them. (F) 1242 Final Store.

9.49 Delf's Atmy, Jones is given come block-market pigeons - but soon discovers they were taken from

coon decoyers they were taken from Tedrigar Source (Fi)

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The Connection of the King James Bible by investigating the book be influence on the English Investigating the book be influence on the English Investigating the book be influenced on the English Investigating the book be influenced on the English Investigating the book being the source (2008) Francisco Harved (2008) Francisco Dylan Thomas Sparring Keral Kingling Serving Keral Kingling Serving Miller, Ciliam Milliaghy and Martinev Flys.

and Matthew Finys.

2.9 The Thileta. Henry leads the invasion of France. France.

11:40 Harse declile. Coop incults the hospital's biggest donor.

12.49 ICC Cricket World Cup Highlights **1.0** Film Force of Eul. (1948) Thriller, ctaming John Gartield **2.2**9EBC News.

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e.ee CITV: Mini CITV: ₩2/CITV: ease CTM Mini CTM 222/CTM 222 Coronation Street #892 This Morning Seturday 222 Mork, see TO Mover, Weather, see To Mork Solders (1998) Notice Been Framed (F) 2.5 Firm Small Solders (1998) The Small Solders (1998) The Small Solders (1998) The Mover Weather, see 2 Live FA Quantity Medicer, see 2 Live FA Quantity Mover (1998) The Mover (1998) The

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The Henry HIT of TV Benry.
The comedition looks back at the week be analysed to the week be analysed to the test coape, reality shows and do amentaries to his unique brand of conting.

The Benry Lact week be winningfamily returns to take on a new cet of challengers, with the two terms looping to had on to an much of their allocated \$100,000 as pocable.

The Be Orn A funner, among our managering to time continue to the company of the comp

achines and a finance manager by to imprece and large women, and last week's outpies go on their date. Fackly McAinmece precents.

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(F) 8.69 The Track and Field
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8.19 Te The Big Bang Theory
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9.30 Channel 9 Howa. 9.30 Whongitte.

9.00 vibergible.
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Day Hugh Formley
Whiting dail turns his attention to vegetable.
(F)
400 Serve Ages of Briefs.
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EC to set AD JPS

The period from 1000 BC to 48 AD (F)
The period from 1000 BC to 48 AD (F)
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Micore.
15.9 Send Up 6.1 the Yeel.
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by Resin Bridges.

exec Film Election (1996) 436 Without a Trace (F) 2,439 Friellegel (F) 9,49 Feaper (F) 9,329 Wogan't Perfect Recall (F) 2339 Countriewn (F)

Channel 5 Digital

9.00 hillschake! 90.00 The Gadget Show Shorts. (F) 90.00 UEFR Europa Leogue highlights. 4500 Hillschaft Show (F) 90.00 Hillschaft Show Hillsch

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experts placeted over e-yew/thece technicary that conflicts with the physical evidence. (F) 1.4 CSE thank. The young daughter of a wealthy family finds her namy dead, cetting in motion an investigation that these are will thereby

an investigation that check an unlitatering light on the lives of the rich and famous. (F)

••• CCS IIV.A department core manager is found murdered!

••• CCS fune Source have tiggeted in a bit Straining William Petersen. (F)

SuperCacino. Live interactive gaming water Year Sport. The work of community clott initiatives (F) was black in Morenta. (F) was black in Morenta. (F) was Harnic Helphine (F) was Thomas 3 Friewic, (F) was Thomas 3 Friewic, (F) was Thomas 3 Friewic, (F) was Forry the Rading Car. (F)

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105 Flor The LMig Daykjills (1987) 9.15 Flor: Spartagie (2004) Historical Irania, carring Gerai Manjia 200 killeler 020 Reidle Flittor Verais the World 10.00 Ullinate Force 11.00 Flor United 38 (2006)

BECTIFE IN

700 Great Movie Mictales 2: The Septiel Conneillar Robert Webb precents a blecker either of the clieve Fabrithy gaffec from come of Hollywoods blygest blockbusters. 785 Top Gear. The precenters travel lineigh Veltain. 8,00 Popts Greatest Dance Grazes. The top 50 dance fals. #1.00 Family Guy

BBC FOUR

BBC POUR.

70 Habries Circat Ewiste. The animal religation of stilletoness and abbras. 8.00 Agony & Bockbey A War with English Habrosia Exist. A beligh-filte-conice look at the company 0.00 The folling 1900 Heor TV Rithel Viru Fie. Clark Brooker pick apart bidnal TV programmes and decementative. Lack in the certe. 1900 (aband at the BBC. Additive performances by Cat Stevens, Roxy Indicators Beds bidner.) Missionani Bob Marley

125 Holyozko 4:00 blake t or Break It 5:00 Histoic 0:20 Gées 220 The Big Bang Theory 8:25Fhebric 30:00 FincThe 5 to 8tab (2001) Addon consequently darring Samuel L. Jackson. 11:95The Cleveland Shoo

PLIN

Camp On Regardece (1981) Stapetick connectly claiming Set James, 9:55 The Woodlanders (1997) 6:50 Mile Months (1995) 8.50 Submarine Special 0.00 Double Jeopaniy (1939) Timiler, starting Addiey Justi. #LOS The Texas: Graticavy Massacre (2008) Homo remake, starting Jessica Biel and R Lee Briney

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Channel 5

De la Let The Enell. (1904)
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 Parel Hery Cathlera:
 (2002) Paychological
 thile, carring Coln
 Force.

FAIR OI. 19.90 | ELEC Donkto Thrus.

(1997) Action activenture, starring Jean-Clauxie Van Damme.



TOP GEAR

So that was series 16 of Top

Gear, the run in which a new Sta

was born - and turned out to be rather similar to the last one;

John Prespott went heavito heavi with Jeremy Clarkson, and James May drove Nacat Intest Space

Exploration Vehicle - nather taxily The special guests also proved to be great fun. Askieft om plugging

new mode Paul, Simon Fegg and Nick Froat took to the track as

State In the Reasonably Priced

Car, anxitthere was no shortaxie

race against the rotation of the

Earth the triot Albanian Jaunt,

tecting the Role-Royce Ghod, Bertiley Mulcanne and Mercecles-Bertile SSS AMO.

of great duallenges either, and as Clarkson using a Jaguar XJ to

BBC2, 8pm

9.40 Breakfast, 19.00 The Ankhow Matri: Show, 19.40 The Big Mations Rugby Union England v Scotland (Mot-off 3.00 pm), 2006 Songs of Praise, 2272/ESC News; Regional News; Weather.

Regional News, Vertitler.

9.6 I By al Stripe's Stupes
Stupes. Recipes for
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Alte At Sympa Rond shows From Victoria Hall in

Saltaire, West Yorksin corles Boyll is uncetted when the Boyll is uncetted when the team gets a new arkition.

10.00 BioC library Regional library Variation.

10.00 PioC state (Acady white Corles Forthwen).

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1429 data of o'TV The
Super Langue Show
Including Ingrigate of
Huddendied Glante v
Bradford Buile.

14.33 Reggle Perfix David reveals his true colours at the avimming baths.

변호와 Lead Balloott (R) Weatherslew, 1998 Sign Zone Radiks on Rotton (R) 249 Hoby City (R) 449 Imagine, (R) 948 BBO News

BBC2

8.40 Obsobled, 1897 CBBC, 18,40 Something for the Weekerst, 1842 Film 2011 with Classian Whiteleast, 1951 Self Film His Wind of Woman (1951) Offine chang, daring Folost Michael 1822 Filosions and the late Jane Faccall, 1822 Filosions and page Faccal film Country (F) 2.20 Count (F) 2.20 Exatteriors, 450 Ecoape to the Country (F) 9.40 Film Spice Tail (F) 2.20 Film Goal II: Uning the Dream (2007) Prenieres Footbard couple, charring Runo Bedder.

200 The Real Paline Jelic James Bladfar's Ellic Eligibs. The TV chef competed in the classic

out ringe. (R) **100 Thy flend** Complicion.

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precent more of their
favourite moments from
the 16th ceries of the
motoring magazine.
You have effice
Universe. Professor
Brian Cox explores the

erantico exponentia or mater, explaining how the origins of manifeld are linked to the life open of the universel care.

(2005) A macked anarolist cets out to undernine Britains totalitation government and weak revenge on the old enemies. Partiristic action thriller, with Matalle Portman and Hugo Weaving.

time ICC Cricket World Cup Highlights, the Flint The Boys of Stincet Rikige. (2001) Drama, daming Powny Cox 248 BBC News, 448 The Super League Show, 248 Cloce.

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9.80 CITY, May CITY, 22/2CITY, 132/May the Bect House Will, (F) 98.22/House Gift, (F) 98.22/House Gift, (F) 98.22/House Gift, 24.24/House Date, (F) 98.9 ITY News, Vectories, 46.22/Live FA Cup Football, Stoke City v Weet Ham United, (Richert 2 Copin), 9.42/Milliomer Mardero (F)

9.45 Regional Programmes. 9.25 PTV Howel Yearhoo. 9.46 Resty Mart TV Bridy. Combinesses of the week bidnall-core on

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performance by the Overtones.

9.20 TV Howe Visions.

9.20 12 Gry Right Syde.
Action from the two remaining of the round matches.

1.20 Augier/rests Cry.

Bright Value. Action from the complicate.

62.20 The Zone; ITV News Headlines, 2.40 Film: Sweet Charity (1909) Musical, durring Stiffley MacLaine, 9.40 ITV Nightcoreen, 2240 ITV Monthy

Channel 4

9.6 The Hooks (R) 9.49 The Hooks (R) 200 FIS Freedyle World Ski Champlondhijs, 200 That Pandymplo Show (R) 200 Tik Priemis (R) 84974 Friends Tat Priemic (P) & SET 4: Priemic (P) & SET 75: Polyactor, Polyactor, SES 75: Polyactor, Polyactor,

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142 Going Back 2.49 The Family (F) 4.32 Afficial aTrace, (F) 9.49 Respect (F) 349 Grudge Match (F) 249 Wogarfo Ferfect Recall (F) 249 Countdown (F)

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BBC FOUR

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0.010 klake itor Break it 9.00 Film: Cheaper By the Dozen 2 (2005) 6.00 Film: 720 302 to 82**5 Pla**nic **1**000 Rinle Tibe 2011

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Weather, 12.5 Englin Hart 140 BBC News;

Weather, 135 Regions Hews; Weather, 155

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Thursday

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A Devon-based DJ has made a Wolverhampton venue her second home as she bids to find the best new talent coming out of the Midlands

Emma Scott is on the hunt for the next Robert Plant or Slade and has appropriately made The Slade Rooms the home for her

made The Slade Rooms in en nome for her Emma Scott Presents series of gigs. The gigs, which are also staged in Birmingham, aim to give local bands more exposure and the chance to gain new fans. She has now released a book and given a seminar on how to 'break your band' in the music industry.

industry.

She said: "I receive hundreds of band's demos every month, and there are some really good ones out there. This is a way of making sure they do the

Emma Scott moved down to Devon in 2009 to

ONE quarter of the biggest band release on DVD ever – former Beatle Ringo Starr – Tickets are £27.50. brings his own all-star group for a rare concert appearance at Birmingham Symphony Hall on June 20. Tickets are priced £55 and £60.

THE TREND for bands performing their 'classic' albums continues with Birmingham's Ocean Colour Scene performing Moseley Shoals from start to finish at Wolverhampton Civic Hall on December 9 (tickets £24.50) and a week later The Wonder Stuff performing Never Loved Elvis in its entirety at Birmingham's O2 Academy on December 100 from the Stuff Performing Never Loved Elvis in its entirety at Birmingham's O2 Academy on December 100 from the Stuff Performance of the Stuff CO-CREATOR of The Office and Ricky Gervais's partner in comedy Stephen Merchant brings his Hello Ladies tour to Wolverhampton Civic Hall on November 5 for a special show which is being recorded for

is where she got her taste for the Midlands music scene. Her first Cobain, Hunter S Thompson, Paul McCartney, Jon Emma Scott Presents gig was at the Little Civic in Wolverhampton in 2007. The gig series was originally going to be once a month, but has now grown to around six of travelling for Emma. She said: "I spend a lot of time on the M5, travelling to and from all my gigs, but it's all worth it."

Her first seminar, called Break Your Band, was held at The Slade Rooms last month, and around 80 people heard the speech she gave about the music industry from the promoter and DJ's view.

Feedback

Feedback

She said: "The feedback I received from the seminar was amazing. I didn't think that many people would turn up and we had a lot of people from bands saying I talked about things they never realised before."

realised before."
Her book, Break Your Band – A Guide to Getting
Radio Airplay, will be available to buy from Amazon
next month and advises bands how to put together
the perfect press pack, rules of the radio, which
presenters play unsigned music and how to get on
a station's playlief.

presenters play playist.

She said: "I hate the thought that bands are wasting their time by sending the wrong material, or missing valuable airplay as they've sent their CD to the wrong address, or offended the DJ by spelling his or her name incorrectly.

"As a presenter I get a real buzz when I get a great

press pack in the post, and I get even more excited when the quality of the band is great too! I love the thought that the bands will be listening to their continue her radio career after leaving Birming- thought that the bands will be listening to their ham-based Kerrang! Radio after five years, which songs on the radio, and try and imagine how great DVD and Blu Ray. ber 15 (£20).

THE TREND for bands perform-

FREEFALL Dance Company present Seaside Rendevouz: A Tribute To Freddie Mercury at the Patrick Centre in Birmingham Hip-podrome on Thursday, March 15. It

podrome on I nursday, March 15. It is the talented company's first work choreographed to rock music and takes inspiration from both the music of Queen and the saucy humour of old fashioned seaside postcards. Call 0844 338 5000.

Stacle Rooms.
The five-piece from Birmingham have gone on from strength to strength, from supporting 80s-rock band Europe, of Final Countdown fame, to headlining their own UK Tour, which visits Wolverhampton Stade Rooms on April 24.
Another success story is The Whiskey Syndicate, a rock foursome from Wolverhampton who headlined an Ernma Scott Presents gig at The Slade Rooms at the beginning of February, and released their EP, Stick or Twisted? earlier this year. Speaking of The Whiskey Syndicate, Ernma said: "These guys are someone to look forward to. I've worked with them a few times and they're great." The Emma Scott Presents gigs stopped for a brief period as she relocated to just outside Exeter, but were relaunched again in April last year as another success story, The Lines, brought the series back in style.
Since the relaunch, The Lines have gone on to headline the Wulfrun Hall, release their debut album and support local favourites Ocean Colour Scene. Emma is looking forward to a busy future, with the hope that many of the bands she has nurtured will go on to become staples of the music industry, and, no doubt, there are likely to be more books in the princiline.

and, no doubt, there are likely to be more books in the pipeline.

Toploader, who had a massive hit in Toploader, who had a massive hit in 2000 with their cover of Dancing In The Moonlight, are back together and touring again. The Eastbourne band, who split after the demise of their record label in 2003 despite selling a million copies of their debut album Onka's Big Moka, will release their third album, Only Human, in May. Their tour includes a date at the HMV Institute in Birmingham on Saturday, March 19.

REVIEWS

PLAN B WOLVERHAMPTON, CIVIC HALL The Defamation of Strickland Bank

The Defamation of Strickland Banks became a reality last week as singer Plan B brought his story of wrongdoing to the Civic Hall. Opening with Writing's On The Wall, the sixth single off his album, the London crooner confirmed his transition from bad-boy rapper to soul superstar.

The singer, real name Ben Drew, played a set full of songs off his second album, which tells the story of the fictional singer Strickland Banks, who is jailed for a crime he didn't commit. Songs such as Welcome to Hell, The Recluse and Traded In My Cigarettes document Banks's struggles with coping in jail, while covering up the sadness with shimmering Motown grooves and crooning soul vocals. The risky move from underground rap to Northern Soul-fuelled poproved to be a clever one for the singer, as the crowd song every word of singles She Said and Love Gos

proved to be a clever one for the singer, as the crowd sung every word of singles She Said and Love Goes Down.His encore picked up the tempo as he did a medley of soul songs, which he said were for the "older crowd".

Jon Pritchard

NE-YO AND TREY SONGZ, BIRMINGHAM NIA

Trey Songz opened with a perform-ance that appealed to the ladies Having released four albums, he might not vet be a household name, but he

not yet be a household name, but he certainly had the crowds on his side. Performing covers and his own songs, including the lead single Bottoms Up from – a collaboration with Nicki Minaj from his latest album Passion, Pain and Pleasure he proved to be an excellent show man. Ne-Yo followed with a flawless performance of upbeat numbers and emotional love songs.

formance of upbeat numbers and emotional love songs.

Talented female dancers kept the main man company on stage, performing both provocative moves and skilled ballet steps.

Ne-Yo said: "I've heard that Birmingham's where the party's at."

This proved to be true as most of the fans spent the whole performance on their feet dancing to hits like So Sick and Beautiful Monster.

With the crowds cscreaming for more, he ended with an encore of Closer. Trey songz will be back in the UK at 02 Academy Birmingham on April 25.

Alex Wainwright

CRANFORD
THE GRAND, WOLVERHAMPTON
This costumed comedy set in the

This costumed comedy set in the insular world of Cranford is inhabited by a group of repressed, gossipy, snobbish and class-ridden women whose biggest dilemma to date is working out how to address a countess. The cast, lead perfectly by Kathryn Dimery as Miss Matilda Jenkins, go through the motions of Victorian living seeking to keep the status quo of Cranford until circumstances overtake them and make them re-evaluate their social priorities.

The wonderfully dressed women live in the fearful shadow of offending the sensibilities of domineering matriarch The Honourable Mrs Jamieson played with suitable starch by Hildegard Neil. Throw into the melting pot a maid with ambitions, a widowed countess who causes a stir and you have a jolly almost farcial show which produces one liners such as "You can't

Danny Farragher

Danny Farragher

LA FILLE MAL GARDEE.
BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME.
This old favourite from the Birmingham Royal
Ballet repertoire delighted audiences with its
fun and frolics.Despite its French origins, this
was a tale of merry olde England with maypole
dancing, harvest festivities, a rustic clown, a
clog dancing darme and even giant chickens.
Frederick Ashton's 50-year-old version is an
escapist rural fantasy, certainly a tad twee but
warmly received by audiences that appreciated
its humorous good nature and vibrant energy.
Jamie Bond danced powerfully as the young
farmer, Elisha Willis was vivacious as his sweetheart and American dancer Mathias Dingman a heart and American dancer Mathias Dingman a superb clown as her clumsy suitor. But all were upstaged by the cast's one non-dancer, a white Shetland pony.

Leon Burakowski

FLAINE PAIGE

ELAINE PAIGE,
B-HAM. SYMPHONY HALL.
More than 30 years a showbiz diva, Elaine
Paige proved that she's still the little lady with
the biggest voice with her two-hour concert at
Birmingham, which was completed by a standing ovation for the essential encore, Memory
from Andrew Lloyd Webber musical Cats.
She had been in character to recall her greatest stage successes, including Evita and
Norma Desmond from Sunset Boulevard.
Other highlights included her version of Mike
Batt's Closest Thing To Crazy, new song It's
Only Life (written for her by Gary Barlow and
Tim Rice and sung with impressive newcomer
Hermione Hennessy) and a showstopping I'm
Still Here from Stephen Sondheim's Follies.

Leon Burakowski

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ROLLENDS









The top property guide for Walsall, Brownhills, Aldridge, Willenhall and Bloxwich

Willenhall property is so well-presented

very well-presented three-bedroomed detached family residence which the current owners have substantially improved is on the market with Fraser Wood estate

with Fraser Wood estate agent.

Offers in the region of £154,950 are invited for thisDursley Close property which the agent advises is in council tax band C.

The ground floor is accessed via a reception hall with radiator, stairs to the first floor and a door to the lounge which measures 22ft 9in x 11ft 10in. The room has two radiators and understairs storage.

With patio doors to the rear garden the dining room measures 10ft 8in x 7ft 11in and is adjacent to the breakfast room with dimensions of 7ft 4in x 6ft 11ft. Here there is wood flooring, a double-glazed window and door to the rear garden.

With a range of cupboards, the light of the control of the co

With a range of cupboards, the kitchen measures 11ft 2in x 6ft 11in

and is fitted with laminate worksurfaces, an inset one-and-a-half bowl sink with drainer board, tiled ceramic splashbacks and includes plumbing for a washing machine and a gas cooker point.

On the first floor landing there is access to the loft and three bedrooms. Each of the rooms measure 11ft 5in x 8ft 11in; 11ft 1in x 7ft and 6ft 4in x 5ft 11in.

Panelled

The bathroom is also on the first floor and includes a white suite with WC, wash basin, wood panelled bath with mixer shower, double-glazed

window and radiator.
Outside there is a lawned garden
to the front and asphalt driveway with off-road parking while to the rear is a brick-paved patio with steps leading to a lawn. There is also a garage which measures 7ft 6in x

a garage winch measured. If 71 in Viewing is via the Willenhall branch, visit the website at www.fraser-wood.co.uk or call 01902 367367 to arrange a viewing.



The lounge includes a feature fireplace with window to front elevation and patio doors to the rear garden.



Offers in the region of £154.950 are invited for this three-bedroomed detached, in Dursley Close

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- detached house

 Located in a quiet ould-sac with open aspect to
 the rear

 Internal viewing is highly recommended

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 Two bedrooms, bathroom/VVC

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 Sides attached garage, crete print driveway

- Offers in the Region £128,950



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- Willenhall

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 bathroom

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- NO UPWARD CHAIN!!!!
- Offers in The regon of £59,950



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Walsall

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- Walsall



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direr, 4 bedrooms, family bethroom, garage, off road parking, front and rear gards OFFERS AROUND: Viewing: 01902 633323 £105,000





kitchen, 3 bedrooms, family bathroom with shower, from and feer genue to an Los OFFERS AROUND: £94,995
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to mater, family bathroom, front drive, rear garden & large rear gars
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OFFERS AROUND: Viewing: 01902 633323 £128,995



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offers AROUND: £134,995
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to exchange of contracts. Paul Dubbeney & Cd., 14 mem rousd, minerals, no OFFERS AROUND: \$98,950
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OFFERS AROUND: £110,000
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OFFERS AROUND: £169,995 Viewing: 01902 633323









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- Spacious Detached Home
- Double Glazing & Central Heating
- Three Good Sized Bedrooms
- Three Reception Rooms
- Side Garage
- Potential to Extend (Subject to Planning Permission)

OFFERS £169,995



- Modern End Town House
- Three Bedrooms
- Guest Cloakroom
- Full Width Dining Kitchen
- Parking Space for 2 Cars
- Viewing Highly Recommended



) Detached Home with Potential

- Central Heating and Double Glazing
- Two Reception Rooms
- Three Bedrooms
- Fitted Kitchen & Utility Room
- Detached Garage & Side Drivewa



- Well presented, extended 2 bed house Gas central heating & Upvc double glazing
- Through Lounge
 Recently re-fitted kitchen opening into
- Modern Bathroom
- Internal viewing essential



TAVERNERS CLOSE, NEW INVENTION WILLENHALL

- Two Bed Semi-Detached House
- Double Glazing & Central Heating) Fittd Kitchen
- Pleasamt Gardens to Front & Rear
- Ideal for First Time Buyer



ROSEWOOD DRIVE.COPPICE FARM

- Two Bedroomed Semi Detached
- Double Glazing and Gas Cental Heating
- Fitted Kitchen
- Fore and Rear Garden

Off Road Parking
 OFFERS £109,950



ST GEORGES STREET, DARLASTON

- Three Bed Semi-Detached
- Central Heating & Double Glazing
- Wide Reception Hall
- L-Shaped Lounge/Dining Room
- Integral Garage

OFFERS £119,950



RED BROOK ROAD, CAVENDISH PARK, WALSALL

- Modern Two Bed Semi
- Gas Central Heating & Double Glazing
- Fitted Kitchen
- Rear Living Room
- Off-Road Parking

Fore and Rear Gardens



BROADWATERS ROAD, DARLASTON

- Semi-detached two bedroomed House
- Large Plot with additional Parking
- UPVC double glazed and Gas Centra Heating
- Lounge
- Fitted Breakfast Kitchen
- Bathroom



OFFERS £79,950



- ★ 3 Bedroom Terrace
- ★ Lounge/dining room
- ★ Breakfast/sitting room ★ Fitted Kitchen, D/S shower room
- ★ Family Bathroom
- ★ Double Glazing, GCH



- ★ First Floor Apartment
- ★ Two Bedrooms
- ★ Lounge
- ★ Kitchen
- ★ Bathroom ★ Parking



GRENFELL ROAD, BLOXWICH

- ★ Semi-detached
- ★ Two bedrooms
- ★ Lounge/dining room
- ★ Re-fitted kitchen
- ★ Bathroom, Verandah ★ Double Glazed & GCH



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- ★ Lounge
- ★ Gas Central Heating





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- ★ Shower ★ Bathroom
- ★ Storage heaters



- ★ First floor maisonette
- ★ One bedroom ★ Lounge
- ★ Kitchen ★ Bathroom
- ★ Double glazing, GCH £325pcm

This is only a small

















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Tipton



Woden Road South ated on kitchen and first floor bathroon

A super family home situated on one of the town's most popular roads having three bedrooms, guest wc, rear garden, generou off road parking and open view two reception rooms, refitted to the front. $\pounds 169,995$



St Lukes Road an immaculately presented, bedroom semi detached property at the head of a double glazed and centrally heated three quiet cul de sac.



West Bromwich

rving central heating and double glazing, this firee bedroom semi has a south-facing parden as well a garage and are ado port. Quietly situated and for sale with no upward chain, this property has a lot to offer a young family and briefly £127,500



a quiet cul de sac close to Walsall town centre with double glazing, central heating and no upward chain. With a 5% vendor gifted deposit, this

t be viewed by
- 5% Vendor Gifted Deposit



property with central heating, double glazing, and no upward front and rear, this could be an chain. Having a ground floor ideal first time purchase. £84,995



the property benefits from double glazing, central heatin and is competitively priced to appeal to first time buyers or



DARIASTON

n Street STARTER HOME. TWO RECEPTION ROOMS, LONG COMPETITIVELY PRICE DOUBLE GLAZED AND CENTRALLY HEATED TWO BEDROOM GARDEN, AVAILABLE WITH MID TERRACE IDEAL AS A IMMEDIATE POSSESSION.



WEDNESBURY

Immaculate throughout. A two bedroom traditional semi with central heating, double glazing, conservatory and off road parking - A great all round property purchase £124,950



WEST BROMWICH

The comportantly to acquire this superior detached property in a presigne factored property in a presigne factorial property in a presigne factorial protection. E3359,950



WEST BROMWICH

SUSTLEMONE LANE
Speed chain, the property offers tremendous potential to improve end extend regions in the original speed contently planning permission) and simply must be viewed internally to appreciate.
£185,000



- ★ Double glazing and gas fired ★ Front and rear gardens £134,995
- central heating (where sper

 En suite to master bedroom

 Garage and driveway



WEDNESBURY

THE FURLONG
skitts are delighted to offer for sale corner plot the property is fully this modern style end town double glazed and centrally house, having three bedrooms heated and has the added bonus and conveniently situated on a $\,$ of a garage and ample parking. $\pounds122,\!500$



WEDNESBURY

DARBY ROAD ★ Re-fitted first floor bathroom

★ Re-fitted first floor bathroom

★ Private enclosed rear garden

★ Off road parking to the fore

★ Viewings via Wednesbury office

£117,500

- ★ Semi detached house ★ Ideal first time purchase
- ★ Recently fitted kitchen



24 JAMES WATT STREET



DARLASTON WAVERLEY ROAD

Darlaston town centre, this gla spacious traditional-style for £84,950

mid terrace property has central heating and double glazing and offers potential for further improvement..



WEDNESBURY

CURTIN DRIVE

- ★ Three excellent sized bedrooms ★ Enclosed established rear ga ★ Two reception rooms ★ Off road parking and gated
- ★ Fully double glazed and driveway

 £90,000 OFFERS AROUND

WEST BROMWICH

WEST BROMWILL

BUSTLEHOLME LANE

Folly finite kinchen

vorted and refurbished

* Family boltreom and en-suite to
moster

Endosed south facing rear gerden

* Virusing via Wedonchury office

* Visuring via Wednes
Offers Over £239,950



WEDNESBURY

ST. PETER CROFT Situated in a quiet cul de sac accon

n a larger than average plot, this modern-style semi detached home offers £139,950

accommodation of genero proportions and is covere by the remainder of the builders NHBC guarantee.



WEDNESBURY

viole been loringly improved by the current owners, internal releving is considered essential to appreciate the quelly most lost of the internal occommodation which beaufilts \$\frac{1}{2}\$ experience of the internal



WEST BROMWICH

VICARAGE ROAD
VI



WEST BROMWICH

This well presented, traditional style semi

traditional style semi detached property is offered for sule with no control of the property is considered on the property is

NOTICE OF OFFER Property Address: 63 Hall Street, Wednesbury, WS10 8NW

We advise that an offer has been made for the above property in the sum of £58,000.

Any persons wishing to increase on this offer should notify the agents of their best offer prior to exchange of contracts.

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- ★ Large rear garden
 ★ Off road parking
 ★ In need of modern
- ivo reception rooms * Excellent potential to impro £89,950 OFFERS NO CHAIN





WILLENHALL

- FARBROOK WAY, SUMMER HAYES \star 29ft garage and parking for several vehicles
- Dommer style link detached property
 * Excellent location set book behind deep fore garden
 * Two bedrooms with potential to add more (subject to planning regs)
 * Gas CH * Utility room/downstains w.c.
- * Pleasant established rear garden
 - nore (subject to planning regs)

 t.

 * Modernisation required, exce

 £159,950 OFFERS NO CHAIN tion required, excellent potential to improve





WILLENHALL

FARMHOUSE ROAD, CORNER BENTLEY LANE

- cious modern style detached residence isantly appointed accommodation
- ★ Lounge and dining room
 ★ Fitted kitchen inc oven and hob
 ★ Garage and off road parking
 ★ Gas CH, DG windows
- * Three bedrooms

 * Master bedroom with en-suite shower room

 * Gas CH, DG

 £175,000 NO CHAIN





- £75,000 CASH OFFERS ONLY

WEDNESFIELD

- ★ Attractive detached dormer bungalow
- ★ Double glazing and gas central heating
 ★ Garage and off road parking
- ★ Three bedrooms ★ Fitted kitchen ★ Dining room ★ 22ft lounge with feature fireplace ★ Extensive rear garden with patio

 - £230,000 OFFERS





WILLENHALL

- ★ Superb UPVC DG conservatory
- ★ Pleasantly appointed extended semi ★ Corner plot position
 - ★ Gas CH ★ UPVC DG windows
- ★ Three bedrooms ★ Two reception rooms ★ Garage and block paved driveway £147,500 OFFERS VIEWING ESSENTIAL



- l double glazed windows
- * Black paved drivew £97,500 OFFERS



WILLENHALL

- ERNEST CLARK CLOSE, OFF STROUD AVENUE
- property Ideal for first time buyers or a
- * Gas central heating
 * UPVC double glazed windows
 * Spacious 27ft through lounge
 * Dining room and sun room
 * No related chain young faminy

 * Three bedrooms

 \$\pmu \text{No related chain}\$

 \$\pmu \text{\$89,950 OFFERS NO CHAIN}\$



BURE GROVE, RIVERPOINT

- Fitted dining kitchen is
 and heb
 Black paved driveway
 Gas central heating £65,500 FOR 50% SHARED OWNERSHIP



WEDNESFIELD LONGMORE CLOSE, OFF BROAD LANE SOUTH

- ★ UPVC double alazed conservatory
- * Downstairs guest cloakroom
- ★ Fitted kitchen inc oven, hob & refrigerate
 - WAS £210,000 NOW £199,950 OFFERS, VIEWING ESSENTIAL









- ★ Gerage and ample a
 ★ Pleasant garden with



HOUSES IN COPPICE FARM



WILLENHALL CALSTOCK ROAD

- ★ Fitted dining kitchen ★ Upstairs bathroom wi ★ Enclosed rear garden
- ★ uPVC double glazing ★ Garage in nearby block
 WAS £105,000 NOW £102,000 IDEAL FIRST TIME BUY

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- ESSINGTON
- £254,950 offers VIEWING ESSENTIAL



- * External UPVC double glazed windows * Pleasant rear garden £147,500 Offers VIEWING ESSENTIAL

COPPICE FARM

★ Modern style semi-deteched ★ Lounge and dining kitchen
★ Gul-de-sac location ★ Upstairs bathreom with showe
★ Two bedrooms ★ Garage and driveway

tenting * Ideal first time p



- glazed windows * Internal viewing essential £124,950 OFFERS, NO CHAIN

- ★ Two/three reception rooms ★ 30ft Garage and ample parking WAS £174,950 NOW £169,950





Willenhall

Wednesfield

Tipton

Bilston

Sedgley

01902 631151

01902 732324

0121 520 2255

01902 353578

01905 686868

Wednesbury 0121 505 1818











£147,950 NO CHAIN

COPPICE FARM ESTATE

★ Uto serious → →
 ★ UPVC double glazed wind
 ★ Gorage and black panel

£199,950



SUMMER HAYES, WILLENHALL BUTE CLOSE

£142,500 OFFERS, VIEWING ESSENTIAL

style property ★ Lounge and dining kitchen
★ Gas warm air central heating ★ Downstairs wc * UPVC double glazed windows * Internal viewing £79,950 No Chain



SHORT HEATH

glazed windows
£199,950 VIEWING ESSENTIAL

tious estended

Superb refitted luxury bothroom
e detached bungdow

Unre double glazed conservatory

Large 16ft rear gorden

ting, upra double

Amyle off road parking for several



WILLENHALL

★ Gas central heating ★ UPVC double glazed windows

★ Fitted kitchen inc. oven and hob ★ Ideal first time purchase £76,950 OFFERS, VIEWING ESSENTIAL

PROPERTIES TO RENT

HIGHGROVE CLOSE, NEW INVENTION 4 BED DETACHED COPPICE LANE. SHORT HEATH STUDIO APARTMENT BOW STREET, WILLENHALL
TWO BED TERRACE
STUBBY LANE, WEDNESFIELD TWO RED APARTMENT £425 PCM

£425 PCM

Dream of yesteryear

the original soundtrack and the catchy music is featuring such 90s punk welcome. For some featuring such 90s punk welcome. For some some featuring such 90s punk welcome. For some featuring such 90s punk welcome. For some featuring such 90s punk welcome. For some some featuring such 90s punk welcome. For some some featuring such 90s punk 90s pu

Ulala in action in Space Channel 5 part 2

love to dance

Dreamcast
Collection
(12, Sega)
AAAH, the Dreamcast.
Many fans of the best
console of the 1990s will
forever bear a grudge
against Sony for the, then,
inferior PlayStation's
victory in the console
wars, which persuaded
Sega to give up hardware
and become a content
provider only.
Maybe that's why so
many Dreamcast refugees
became ardent Xbox supporters. So many former
Dreamcast fans were
delighted to hear that
some of the obsolete
system's games were
being ported to Xbox 350,
originally via subscription
service Xbox Live Arcade.
Four of them are
selected for this compilation, available for X360
and PC, but it's not an
entirely happy package.

entirely happy package. Like watching a favourite kids' TV show decades later, the passage of time shows up the flaws. Also the fact that you have to reboot the disc to swap

reboot the disc to swap games is a chore. Then there are prob-lems with the transfer. Crazy Taxi is still great fun and has that 'Beetlejuice' style voiceover but misses

dancer on screen whilst holding the Wii-mote in the highlighted hand.
There is a super selection of music, ranging from The Pussycat Dolls to The Rolling Stones, and a new Duets mode allows two to perform complementary moves, or two pairs in four-player mode.
The Dance Battle mode pits you against your friends in a series of mini-games too.

Just Dance 2 (3, Ubisoft)

THE sequel to one of the Wii's most popular dance games stays top by keeping things simple – you simply hirror the moves of the silhouetted fidly because of the back and forth to the dancer on screen whilst holding the Wii -mote in the highlighted hand.

There is a super selection of music, tranging from The Pussycat Dolls to The simple to follow the Jackson stand-in as he selection of the super particular to the super particular t simple to follow the Jackson stand-in as he takes you through those familiar signature moves, so I guess the 12 rating is due to the old Jacko groin grab move?

Soon you will be shuffling like a zombie through Thriller or stepping to the familiar

peat of Billie Jean. The actual videos are not used but the dance routines keep true to the style of the originals as you try to score points by copying them as faithfully as possible. Up to eight can play by passing the Wimote. Get that moonwalk right and you really could be starting something.

Dance Juniors (3, Ubisoft)
Similar to Just Dance but more for little kids with nursery rhymes and children's songs alongside favourite pop covers. LB

Greatest hits from the top of PopCap

PopCap Hits! (3, Pop Cap)
Pop Cap Hits Vol 2 (12, Pop Cap)
POPCAP are the leading brand in puzzle
games across the platforms, from PC to mobile
phone via Xbox Live Arcade. These two selections of their best sellers doe Xbox 360 now
allows non-XBLA subscribers to get their hands
on some of the best 2D time-wasters around. on some of the best 2D time-wasters around.

on some of the best 2D time-wasters around.

PopCap Hits 1 features that mother of all addictive
puzzle games Bejeweled, albeit in its slightly tweaked
Bejeweled 2 form. The gem swapping game is a
classic. The other games include the equally addictive
Peggle, which blends Pinball with Breakout; Feeding
Frenzy, 50 levels of a fishy battle for survival; and milldly
diverting also-ran, Astro Pop, a block swapping exer-

diverting also-ran, Astro Pop, a block swapping exercise.

PopCap Hits Volume 2 (released on March 11) boasts Plants Vs Zombies, one of the most popular casual games around, probably second only to the all-conquering Angry Birds. Plants Vs Zombies, most recently a big hit on Xbox Live, is basically a tower defence game but with yourself and neighbour Crazy Dave protecting your property from the living dead via thoughtfully positioned foliage. It's a real brainteaser delivered with macabre humour. Also in the four game package are Feeding Frenzy 2, if the original 50 levels were not enough for seafood chompers; the classic Zuma in which a ball spitting frog has to fend off an implacable flow of coloured balls by matching three in a row; and frenetic shoot-em-up action in Heavy Weapon. It adds up to the better of the two PopCap compilations.



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THE WOLD, CLAVERLEY

Well presented detached family home within this charming village. Reception hall, smart cloakroom/shower room, lovely lounge and study area off, large light dining room with doors to garden, breakfast kitchen, utility and store. Wide landing, three bedrooms, spacious bathroom, Garage, delightful rear garden, terrace leading to mature, neatly maintained grounds.

OFFERS AROUND £385,000



FINCHFIELD

Within a moment's walk of Bantock Pa impressive detached on a prominent plot. Porch. hall, through lounge, of room, kitchen, three bedrooms, bath wc, garage, wide driveway, mature gar modernisation required.

OFFERS AROUND £295,000



WOOD ROAD, CODSALL HOUSE WITH BUILDING PLOT

Lovely location with outlook across open fields. Four bed semi needing full refurbishment, attractive rear garden with Planning Permission for erection of a two bedroomed bungalow, fronting Moatbrook Lane. **OFFERS AROUND £220,000**



WATERLOO ROAD, WOLVERHAMI

Impressive double fronted period premises of city centre with eight parking spaces. Three floor rooms, small kitchen, wcs, large cella rooms on first floor, three rooms on secon-rear yard, approx 2,200 sq ft (205m2). Ex

2 WATERLOO ROAD, WOLVERHAMPTON 01902 710626 OR 42

Home of Property







It's switch on time for beautiful bulbs





GARDENING WITH PAT EDWARDS

here are many small bulbs which are coming into flower now, helping to keep the snowdrops

A little bigger than the snowdrop is the summer snowflake. This is about 30 centimetres tall, and white, like the snowdrop, but has a green rim to the petals. They mul-tiply slowly, making a bigger clump each year, long enough stems to put into a vase,

Crocuses are, of course, all appearing now, in bright orange yellow, purple and white stripes. I love the tiny ones, which come in masses and always come again, usually a little before the

When the sun comes out they open wide as if embracing the suns rays, they are the perfect spring's heralders.

spring s neraiders.

If they are planted in grass care must be taken not to cut the grass until they have died down naturally.

Wonderful

The crocus leaves build up the corms again after flowering; so must be left to get on with that before 'tidying up' the site.

Iris stylosa, or unguicularus, as it is now called, can flower from November right through the winter, but this year it has only just made it, so is now looking wonderful.

They last for such a long time outside, and are astonishingly tough for such a tender looking flower.

Ipheion is a small bulb which is not so well known, it can have blue or very pale blue flowers. It smells very faintly of garlic, so is best looked at down the garden, but not picked! I think that if it was given a better name it would be more nounlar.

think that if it was given a better name it would be more popular. The 'baby' daffodils usually come out a little before the big ones. There are the 'cyclaminius' ones, with swept back petals, and the bulbocodium types, which have a bulbus looking skirt instead of a trumpet.

Most of these small bulbs are best planted in a shady place, under shrubs or trees. By the time the shrubs have grown their leaves they have finished flowering, and are dying down, so they are no trouble at all.

A woodland carpet of anemone nemorosa is a beautiful example of this type of planting.

28 Church Street, Bloxwich **Ideal For First Time Buyer**

Charming Victorian End Terraced Property Recently Refurbished to a High Standard

- **★** Through Lounge/Dining Room
- ★ Inner Hall with Stairs off
- ★ Fitted Kitchen
- **★** Two Double Bedrooms
- ★ Superb Bathroom
- ★ Rear Garden
- **★** Gas C/Heating & D/Glazing
- **★** No Upward Chain

Price £89,950

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- **★** Drive For Parking

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Sell

A traditional semi that has gardens and lots of parking



This three-bedroomed home is in Moxley Road, Darlaston. It is available through estste agent Dixons for offers based on £110,000.

As well as being ideally placed for commuters, this semi-detached home has many attractive features, including off-road parking and a large rear garden.

and a large rear garden.

The three-bedroomed home, in Moxley Road, Darlaston, has central heating where specified and is on the market for £110,000 via estate agent Dixons.

Approaching, a gate opens onto a paved driveway with a lawn alongside, enclosed by a brick perimeter wall.

A front door opens into a hallway with a central heating radiator, staircase to the first floor and a guest WC, fitted with a low-level suite.

Measuring 14ft 8in x 11ft 10in, the front-facing lounge has a single-glazed bay window, a gas fire, coved ceiling and radiator.

The front-facing dining woom measures 19ft 10in x 0ft

and radiator.

The front-facing dining room measures 12ft 10in x 9ft 9in and has a radiator.

With dimensions of 11ft 7in x 9ft 11in, the rear-facing kitchen has a range of stylish wall and base units and rolled edge worksurfaces incorporating a stainless steel sink and drainer, space for a cooker and fridge freezer, plumbing for a washing machine, part tiled walls and vinyl flooring.

plumbing for a washing machine, part filed walls and vinyl flooring.

On the landing, there is a rear-facing window and loft access. The front-facing master bedroom measures 12ft 9in x 11ft 10in and has a radiator.

Bedroom two also faces the front and has dimensions of 12ft 2in x 9ft 10in.

12ft Zin x 9ft 10in.

There is a range of fitted wardrobes in the rear-facing third bedroom, which measures 11ft 6in x 8ft 10in and has a further built-in wardrobe currently used as airing cup-

board.

In the bathroom, there is a radiator and a suite comprising a panelled bath with shower over, low-level WC, wash basin, partly-tiled walls and a storage cupboard.

At the rear of the house, there is what the agent describes as an "exceptional plot", enclosed by perimeter fencing. Visit www.dixonsestateagents.co.uk or call 01902 634 497.

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Taking three steps to a heavenly home life

N 1951 the home was a sanctuary of comfort and calm in which families could focus on simple pleasures - sitting down for meals together, listening to the radio or gramophone, and pursuing their hobbies.

Sixty years may have changed many Sixty years may have changed many things about our lifestyles, but West Midlands house-hunters are still seeking practical homes that promote modern domestic bliss, and are turning to Taylor Wimpey's 2011 collection for properties with this sort of practical charm and appeal.

lection for properties with this sort of practical charm and appeal.

Inspired by a growing trend in the West Midlands for enjoying leisure time spent at home, Taylor Wimpey's Three Steps to Heaven campaign marks a return to comfortable, simple and practical home-living.

Jan Titley, regional sales and marketing director for Taylor Wimpey, says: "Our brand new homes are designed to ensure families and couples have exactly the right spaces for enjoying quality time together.

"The kitchens are thoughtfully planned to make preparing home-cooked meals a breeze, as well as being at the heart of the home for relaxed family gatherings and when friends pop by for a cup of tea and a catch-up.

"And while 1950s homes were just beginning to benefit from some of the household appliances that make life easier, our fitted kitchens are a place where cooking can be enjoyed as a hobby and come with the option to add a whole range of integrated appliances that would have wowed the fifties family."

Whereas Taylor Wimpey's new homes for 2011 each have a fitted kitchen including built-in oven, hob and hood, plus space for a great range of optional appliances, in the 1950s only a third of households had a

built-in oven, hob and hood, plus space for a great range of optional appliances, in the 1950s only a third of households had a washing machine and only 15 per cent had a fridge. Freezers and tumble dryers, meanwhile, were virtually unheard of, and whereas the majority of Taylor Wimpey's new-build properties are designed for leisure pursuits such as home computing and gaming, with strategic phone points and power sockets to selected rooms, only 10 per cent of the population in the 1950s even had a telephone.

To complement its new apartments and houses designed to cater for this relaxed



Developer Taylor Wimpey reflects on decades of home ownership

and homely lifestyle, Taylor Wimpey is helping movers across the region take three easy steps to a heavenly new home:

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First-time buyers can also find out about First-time buyers can also find out about the great range of incentives to help them step on the property ladder with Taylor Wimpey in the West Midlands, which is cur-rently offering brand new apartments at selected developments from only £79,995. Even more opportunities to make an easy move are now available at Taylor Wimpey's brand new The Meadows development

which is now open in Telford, Shropshire, offering a stunning selection of two, three and four-bedroom properties from as little as £144,995.

Taylor Wimpey sales staff in the region are getting into the spirit of the campaign, which is currently available at sites across the West Midlands, including Beresford Grove, Oldbury on 0845 026 3993 and Cedar Drive, Oldbury on 0845 071 8697.

Incentives can be tailored to customers' individual circumstances and are subject to

individual circumstances and are subject to availability, with further information able from the sales executive at each devel

opment.
Alternatively, would-be movers can contact the housebuilder's regional head-quarters on 0121 703 3400 or visit the site www.taylorwimpey.co.uk



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Peugeot 508 ROAD TEST

Modern, desirable and so Frenc

e'll do our best to steer well clear of national stereotypes for obvious reasons, but to give credit where it's due the best French cars are decidedly, well -French.

If you pick through the highlights of Peugeot's back catalogue, the more they have stuck to their guns rather than trying to chase the approach of rival manufacturers, the better the end paraduct product.

product.
By mutual agreement the 205 of 1983 is regarded as the finest Peugeot of recent times, blessed as it was with a pretty body, simple interior and a sweet diving oversiences. driving experience.

Wagons

But Peugeot also enjoys a reputation as a maker of fine mid-sized saloons and wagons, with the 505, 405 and recent 407 being the pick of the bunch.

It is the job of the 508 to take on that mantle, a difficult task given that it has to please the Gallic purists who want to see a given that it has to please the Gallic purists who want to see a artisans have taken the holistic floaty ride and a quirky cabin as approach to the problem and well as tempt those who are on decided that their own way is the their fifth German saloon in as only way



There's a quality feel to the switchgear



The 508's shape has prescence and style

The 508 is a desirable, capable saloon that will give buyers plenty to think about

many years and are quite happy, thank you very much.

It is a fierce market to compete in with manufacturers fighting over a gradually falling number of buyers.

this is a truly modern Peugeot, much in the spirit of the 3008 crossover in that it steadfastly refuses to simply follow existing trends.

The Peugeot badge takes

First impressions confirm that pride of place on the distinctive pride of place on the distinctive nose while the slim windows and gently curving shoulder line give it more of a coupe look – some-thing that will no doubt be met with enthusiasm by potential owners.

> There are LED lights at the rear too, designed to look like claws on the saloon, all of which adds up to a quality feel. Quality is

clearly a priority on the inside too and it is pleasing to see smart new switchgear deployed on the dashboard.

Console

A large screen sits at the centre of things with the main controls on the centre console, while the usual clever arrange-

wheel mean everything is within easy reach. Add in the head-up global path at salready been put to good use elsewhere in the good use elsewhere in the Peugeot range and the 508's cabin has plenty going for it – not least an abundance of space for front and rear occupants.

Although not available on the saloon, it is worth mentioning the panoramic glass roof available on the SW version which runs almost the length of the car and provides a wonderfully airy feeling for passengers.

The French firm hasn't skimped on the engineering for the sake of a posh cabin.

Wishbone

Unlike all of its rivals there are two types of front suspension edisgin depending on the specification of the car, with the higher end versions gaining a more

Wishbone
Unlike all of its rivals there are two types of front suspension design depending on the specification of the car, with the higher end versions gaining a more sophisticated double wishbone set-up.
However, you need not feel short-changed if you go for the lesser version: despite the clear advantages on paper, the simpler front strul layout delivers such a

front strut layout delivers such a good balance between sharp, consistent responses and a fluid ride that you'll forget all about the next model up.

Just like all the best Peugeots bined while the usual clever arrange—the 508 preezes along even more ment of buttons on the steering challenging roads and is happy (by summer 2011)

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FACTS AT A GLANCE Model: Peugeot 508 1.6 e-HDi Active, £21,975 Engine: 1.6-litre diesel engine producing 112bhp and 202lb.ft of torque

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Performance: Top speed
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seconds

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Emissions: 109g/km of CO2

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sumption figures in mpg (J/100 km) for the Picanto range are: Urban: 38.7 (7.3) - 49.6 (5.7), Extra Urban: 54.3 (5.2) - 65.7 (4.3), d: 48.7 (5.8) - 58.8 (4.8). (C) emissions are 137 - 114 g/km.

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Mini returning to roots with new Rocketman



The innovative doors and extending tailgate enhance the functionality of the Mini Rocketman

THE NFW Rocketman concept car sees Mini return-ing to its roots with a more compact model closer in size

ing to its rous with a more compact model closer in size to the 1959 original.

The concept, displayed at the Geneva International Motor Show, is "small on the outside but big on the inside" as designers have striven to make the best available use of space.

The Rocketman is around 11ft long and seats three adults plus a child while retaining the fun-to-drive handling ability that characterises the brand.

It implements the traditional principles of the classic Mini with a lightweight construction and innovative seats and doors, along with the use of groundbreaking technologies for connecting its occupants with the outside world.

The concept is an agile three-door car which offers comfortable accommodation for the driver, front passenger and another passenger,

passenger and another passenger, and can add a fourth individual seat in the rear if necessary.

The capacity of the luggage compartment can be adapted to the passengers' requirements just as flexibly.

as flexibly.

The innovative door and tailgate concept developed for the Mini Rocketman ensures extremely comfortable entry and uncompli-

Drawer

The two-part tailgate consists of one section which is attached to the roof and opens extremely high and a lower section which extends out of the body in the form of a drawer.

The hallmark Mini design lan-

guage is present in the exterior design with large headlights and

design with large neadingints and the chrome-bordered radiator grille dominating the front end.

Large wheels and a boxy shape give the concept the same appearance as the Mini models already in production. The transparent glass

production. The transparent glass roof is segmented by illuminated braces to recreate the look of Britain's Union Jack flag. The control concept for the Rocketman also sees the brand exploring new directions. The customary centre speedometer houses a projection surface boast-ing 3D graphics presentation capability. This allows information particularly relevant to the driving situation to be displayed in the foreground. The display is operated using both the steering wheel buttons and the integrated trackball.

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JUNIORS

Wanderers end season with victory

BREWOOD JR COLTS 2 CRESSWELL WANDERERS 4 U12S

Cresswell travelled for the final game of t league season to Brewood. From the first minu Colts looked the better side and were desperate

Coits looked the better side and were desperately unlucky not to score mainly thanks to Cresswell's superb goalkeeper Ben Harris.

Wanderers suddenly burst into life and grabbed a quick double by half time through Jack Dunn and Nathan Griffiths. After the break Brewood did what they have done so many times this season bringing the scores level through two well-worked goals after eathing Cresswell anyping.

catching Cresswell napping.

In a display of never say die the whole team dug deep and Ryan Brookes grabbed his 34th and 35th of the season to kill the game with minutes left on the

Their mission was now complete winning all 12 games and ending the season on a real high. The smiles on their faces proved what a special season they have had.

SHIRE OAK SHARKS 1 FC PREMIER 1 U16S

SHIRE OAK SHARKS 1 FC PREMIER 1 U168
Sharks took the lead when Callum Watkins raced on to Brett Wilson's through ball and neatly finished. Sharks started the second half brightly and nearly doubled their lead when Kieran Williams outstretched toe could only divert Ashley Bell's cross on

stretched toe count only averturing.

Soon after Premier equalised from the spot but Sharks battled on with Rich Waterhouse pulling the strings in midfield and his fine through ball was neatly finished by Watkins again for what Sharks thought was the winner but the goal was ruled out with the linesman's flag raised for offside.

with the linesman's flag raised for offside.

BLOWICH 3 BUSTLEHOLME 3

The Red Lions looked to be heading for victory until a Bustleholme corner in the last minute was headed home at the far post.

Bloxwich wasted several chances to take the lead early in the first half and were made to pay as the visitors hit two quick goals on the break past stand in keeper James Peace. Goals from Kyle Holmes and Jonathan Akiboye then got Bloxwich back into the game before half time.

The home side dominated the possession in the second half and looked to have won the game when Akiboye netted his second goal of the game before the visitors nicked a point with a last minute equaliser. Captain Ashley Wakeman was named managers man of the match.

BLOXWICH UTD

Red Lions are caught

in an uphill struggle

BUSTLEHOLME 1 BLOXWICH UNITED 1

The Red Lions faced an uphill battle away at Bustleholme after Gary Barton was given a red card in the first half when he was harshly adjudged to have pulled a bustleholme player back who was through on goal.

Bloxwich dominated the opening exchanges and took as well deserved lead when Adam Simkiss curled

Bloxwich dominated the opening exchanges and took a well deserved lead when Adam Simkiss curled home a free kick from outside of the area.

John Freeman then latched onto a superb floated pass from Alan Wilkes on 16 minutes but his first time volley was well saved by the keeper.

Bustleholme missed a good chance to equalise after shooting wide when well placed midway through the half before Martin Lewis went close for the visitors following a Richard Joyce cross.

The second half saw Bloxwich work trielessly to preserve the lead as the home side looked to make their numerical advantage pay and they almost netted a second when Freeman's glancing header from a corner was cleared off the line in the 76th minute. Bloxwich's stubborn resistance was finally broken five minutes from time when a free kick on the edge of the box was curled round the wall and into bottom corner of the net to give Bustleholme a point.

PELSALL VILLA

Ref is sorry as Villa left sickened by a blunder

COVENTRY COPSEWOOD 1

"I'm sorry, I made an absolute mess, I made a big mistake." A Villa defender apologising for the goal? No — the referee on the pivotal point of the game. The honesty is commendable, but that dich thelp Villa. Villa's first threat came when Mark Wooldridge played a clever 1-2 with Andrew Bentley, his shot beat keeper Scott Furlong but being hacked off the line by Sproul.

by Sproul.

After 32 minutes Sproul raced on to a ball over the top, but Ashley Lawley got back to

make an important tackle, then a mix-up in the Villa defence saw Petajon Gordon nip in to plant a header over the bar.

On 42 minutes came the turning point. A ball was played through a flat visitors' defence, Stuart Adamson handled to take the pace off the ball, but it still found Mitchell Green on the right of the box, as horn on the referee was heard to shout "play on".

The ball was rolled across the box and as Wooldridge fired home the referee blew and took the play back to the point of the handball by Adamson. To add insult to injury the

referee and assistant couldn't agree who had handled the ball. Villa should have known it wasn't going to be their day as John Littler's free-kick beat Furlong and bounced away off the bar.

Injury

It got even worse for Villa as two minutes into injury time as Richard Middleton crossed to Gordon at the near post and he tucked the ball home

tucked the ball home.

Four minutes into the second half Scarr
went racing clear on the visitors' left, his
cross was right under the bar and was tipped

over by Collins. Keith Grimsley broke up a Copsewood attack, his ball over the top was read by Green, who ran on and lobbed the ball over the stranded Furlong, before the ball crossed the line Lee Hunt raced back to acrobatically kick the ball clear.

Ashley Lawley got away wide left on 75 minutes, he worked his way to the bye-line and his low cross flashed across the face of goal without anyone getting a touch.

On 88 minutes Lawley's left to right ball found Daniel Hall 35 yards out and his first time effort was well taken by Furlong.

found Daniel Hall 35 yards out and time effort was well taken by Furlong. Bill Shaw

Defiant Saddlers march away from dreaded drop

If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again. For the first time since October, Walsall are out of the League One drop

zone.

Three priceless points against Southampton eased them to fifth-from-bottom and convinced

eased them to Hith-from-bottom and convinced many fans the Great Escape is on.
A side who were dead has now come to life. There is tangible, cautious optimism as every element of the club is reignited and the spirit which had been crushed has returned.
It was third time lucky for the Saddlers — who had

nissed two other opportunities to leapfrog Swindon and it epitomised the turnaround under boss Dean

In January, Saddlers lost 3-0 to Notts County, a wretched performance which sealed the fate of Chris Hutchings. Two months later and Walsall have hope. Smith and the players have given their fans some-

thing they could only have dreamed of until recently. But now there is a different kind of pressure. The heat is on to maintain the charge at Yeovil. Fortune favours the brave and Walsall cannot afford to stop

Demanding

Demanding

The season is an endurance test, one to see who can roll with the punches. And against Southampton they proved they have the stamina.

It is a result which will send shockwaves through the division – at both ends – but could have been so different but for Jimmy Walker and the defence.

Walker excelled and his reaction save from Jose Fonte's header, just a minute before Jon Macken's goal, proved a pivotal moment.

The veteran shot-stopper has shone since his return last October and yet again proved his worth in a team who fought with him. Smith handed at debut to Argentine midfielder Emmanuel Ledesma, who supported Macken in a new 4-4-1-1 formation.

All eyes were on the attacker and the former Genoa ace adds mystique to the Saddlers. An outing which saw flashes of his undoubted talent was promising and his willingness to fight even more so.

Asking him to perform miracles from a standing start is too demanding but the new-boy will undoubtedly improve.

Patience is a virtue and, while he will dip in and out, there will not be many struggling teams with a player like him. But for much of the game Ledesma was forced to battle as Southampton dominated.

Morgan Schneiderlin shot wastefully at Walker as early as the fourth minute before the veteran keeper smothered Lee Barnard's low effor.

The Saints' movement, especially from Barnard, caused problems and the striker was at the heart of a 14th-minute move which had Walker scrambling to parry Dan Harding's drive.

Walker's best moment of magic came when he thwarted Fonte with a magnificent point-blank block on 68 minutes. It proved crucial. Immediately, Lescott found Macken in the clear, due to Jaid losing his bearings, and the striker slotted home.

nensive pri from **F65**



Walsall debutant Emmanuel Ledesma in the thick of the action





Walsall's heroes are rated highly

Jimmy Walker, (Man of the match): His save from Fonte before Macken's winner was stunning and he kept the Saddlers in it with a string of fine stops during an all-action display. 9/10

Aaron Lescott: Provided the assist for Macken and was reliable in the face of some serious pressure. 8/10

some serious pressure. 8/10

Andy Butler: All-important clearance off the line. The skipper led by example and batted away every Saints attack. 9/10

Oliver Lancashire: Marking pal

CASH IN

Lambert, the former Saint had his work cut out but put his body on the line. Tackled, blocked, headed everything. 8/10

Tom Williams: Fantastic late block to deny Lambert epitomised Saddlers' never-say-die spirit. 8/10

say-die spirit. 8/10

Richard Taundry: Came close with a free-kick, but it was his defensive work which caught the eye. 7/10

Paul Marshall: A surprise recall and worked ceaselessly to try to combat the Saints' skill in the middle. 7/10

Matt Richards: Wayward deliveries, but that didn't take away from tenacious display when he didn't have the ball. 8/10 Julian Gray: Winger wasn't allowed to create much, but he still managed to give

the Southampton defence problems. 7/10 the Southampton detence problems. #10

Emmanuel Ledesma: Almost netted a
magnificent volley and showcased not
only class but true grit on his debut. 7/10

Jon Macken: Toiled away before his
opportunism and cool finish bagged him a
first home goal since October. 8/10



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Sport

KHALSA PLAN REVAMP FOR GROUND Page 62

DEFIANT SADDLERS MARCH AWAY Page 63



POINT'S MADE EVEN IF GOALS ARE NOT

SWINDON O WALSALL O

he County Ground has held signifi-cant sway in Walsall's recent history. Now they hope it will help define their future

In 2007 Swindon and the Saddlers shared a 1-1 draw to win promotion to League One. On Saturday they fought out a stalemate for the

Saturnay they lought out a scatemace of an iright to stay there.

A dull draw could pull the wool over everyone's eyes and be rated unimportant. Yet it was a decisive weekend, one which will play a part in fates come

May.

On reflection it helps neither side in their immediate quest to pull away from the bottom but, long-term, it is a better one for Walsall than Swindon.

Results elsewhere ensured the pack squeezed up behind them and left just a little less breathing space of the bottom.

behind them and left just a little less breathing space at the bottom.

Dagenham's win over Bristol Rovers and Plymouth's victory at Sheffield Wednesday were warnings that no-one can be written off in this extraordinary survival battle.

But Walsall's draw stretched their unbeaten run to three games – they have lost just twice in 10 – and maintained their status outside the bottom four.

Rather than being a "must win" game it was a "must not lose" outing as defeat would have plunged the Saddlers back into the drop zone and left them with a points and games disadvantage. As it is they remain fifth bottom with that all-important psychological advantage of looking down.

Frontrunners

Frontrunners

Dagenham's four games in hand are, of course, a worry but the Saddlers have got the points on the board and at this stage that's what matters.

Every other club below them wants to be in Walsall's shoes and for as long as they remain the frontrunners, the Saddlers are the envy of their relegation rivals.

As it is, toothless Swindon will have a job staying up and they now languish behind Dagenham and the Saddlers.

The heat was on the Robins with a packed house, a new manager in Paul Hart and the chance to escape the bottom four at the first time of asking. Really, all the Saddlers had to do was frustrate and half the job was done. They did that with a little elbow grease without seriously threatening themselves.

selves.

Richard Taundry's deflected effort and the midfielder's header which landed on the roof of the net
was about as good as it got as Walsall failed to find
their attacking rhythm.

Unspectacular

Jon Macken and Emmanuel Ledesma failed to click while the midfield — with Marc-Antoine Gbarssin enjoying a solid if unspectacular debut — never penetrated.

Defensively, though, the Saddlers shone again. It

never penetrated.

Defensively, though, the Saddlers shone again. It is now three clean sheets in succession—four in their last five games—as boss Dean Smith and defendersturned-coaches Jon Whitney and Chris Nicholl stamp their mark on the team.

Since Smith was named permanent manager they have conceded just nine goals in 11 games, plugging the leak which was threatening to send them down without a trace.

without a trace.

without a trace.

Only Colchester and Bournemouth have broken
the backline in the last six games, the defensive
solidity a far cry from the team which leaked 44 goals
in Chris Hutchings' 26 outings this season. The concentration is now there, a steely determination
which resonates around the well balanced back four. The new defensive resilience was underlined in Wiltshire even if they were rarely put under sustained pressure by Swindon.

Andy Butler, the ever-improving Oliver Lan-cashire and Jimmy Walker formed the bulk of the resistance while Taundry covered an extraordinary amount of ground.



Julian Gray on what was a frustrating afternoon for him



Substitute Darren Byfield looks for a way past Michael Rose



Jon Macken being harrassed in the scoreless draw.



Richard Taundry on the case against Swindor

New signing Marc shows confidence

New signing Marc-Antoine Gbarssin insists Walsall will survive as they cranked the heat up on their relegation rivals.

The Saddlers ground out a 0-0 draw at Swindon on Saturday to stay three points clear of the drop zone. Gbarssin made his bow at the County Ground, after signing on loan from Carlisle on Friday, and reckons his new club have what it takes to survive. He said: "The team have enough quality to stay in League One and if we put in the same effort until the end of the season relegation is

season relegation is avoidable.

avoidable.
"I'm really positive and I want to be a part of this. We have to be positive because we have enough quality to do it.
"There's no big problem and if we put in the come affect with the

"There's no big problem and if we put in the same effort until the end of the season we'll surely stay in this position. The collective challenge is to stay in the division and we can't forget the club wants to stay in the division — it's not done yet."

The 26-year-old Frenchman helped the Saddlers to collect a battling point — which was preserved by Jimmy Walker's last-minute save from Michael Rose — and insisted it was a crucial result for Dean Smith's men.

Maybe they passed it better than us but we can't forget it was a good point away from home," said the midfielder. Both teams did a good job and it was a fair result.

"It was a difficult game because it was a battle in midfield, it was difficult to pass the ball because we had a lot of pressure on us in the midfield. Both teams worked really hard."

The former Antwerp star and Bordeaux trainee vowed to give his all for the Saddlers' cause.

He said: "In my position you have to be strong, win the duels and win the battles — you can't play in the position if you don't have the quality.

"I can bring it to the team and I tried to do it on Saturday and will in the next game."

Youth team victory

The Saddlers' youth team beat League leaders. Rochdale 4-2. Connor Deards opened the scoring just a minute before the break and within five minutes of the second half Rochdale were back on level terms when Tom Hayes conceded a penalty.

Deards then scored from a Walsall penalty and the side extende their lead through Butlin finding the net. Rochdale kept pushing forwards and reduced the arrears shortly afterwards.

The game was made safe when Keiron Morris weighed in with a fourth goal. However, Aaron Forde broke his leg in the closing stages.

SADDLERS PLAYER STATS subs: 2 Westlake for 3 [90 mins], 9 Byfield**×1 ◆1** Walker (1 Catch) Lescot for 30 [64 mins], 11 Nicholls 1 for Williams Taundry

Nicholls 1 f 18 [52 mins], not used: 21 Bevan, 6 Smith, 12 Marshall, 19 Grigg Macken *****1 ✓1 ◆2 Key to reading the player stats:

defensive block

defensive clearance

shot on target

shot off target

Fouls committed

Free-kick won

Caught offside

Crosses

4,1 **#**3

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CALL 01922 651 416 CLICK saddlers.co.uk

OFFER DATES: 1st March - 2nd April







Gbarssin Gray

